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THE
WORLD UNMASK'D:

OR, THE

Philosopher the greatest Cheat;

His IN *His*

Twenty-Four DIALOGUES.

Book

To which is added, 1744

The STATE of SOULS separated
from their BODIES:

Being an EPISTOLARY TREATISE, wherein is proved,
by a Variety of Arguments, deduced from Holy
Scripture, that the PUNISHMENTS of the WICKED
will not be ETERNAL; and all Objections
against it solved.

To which is prefix'd,

A Large INTRODUCTION, evincing the same
Truth from the Principles of NATURAL
RELIGION.

Translated from the French.

THE SECOND EDITION:

To which are added,

Two LETTERS concerning the MISTAKEN POINT of
HONOUR among WRITERS.

VOL. II.

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THE
WORLD UNCLASSIFIED

OR THE

Philosophy of the Grange Course

By Wm. M. M.

Third Edition

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VOL. II

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THE
SYSTEMS
OF THE
ANTIENS and MODERNS,
RECONCILED;

By an Exposition of the different SENTI-
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the STATE of SOULS, when separated from
their Bodies.

IN
FOURTEEN LETTERS.

With NOTES, and some Additional Pieces
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P R E F A C E.

TH E S E Letters, which have been thought worthy of the Attention of some judicious Persons, will, without doubt, meet with Opposition from such as are prejudiced against all Appearance of Novelty. Perhaps, even Men of Piety, on the bare View of the Title-Page, will declare the Subject of them to be curious Questions, which it is not allowable to examine or inquire deeply into. They would be easily undeceived, would they be at the pains of perusing them, with a Frame of Mind entirely free from Partiality. Questions of mere Curiosity have no real Tendency; they are of no Use, either for Speculation or Practice. Instead of clearing up the Difficulties or apparent Contradictions in Religion, they produce new ones.

It may here be said, that the Truth deliver'd in these Letters, are useful in both Theory and Practice, were it not more proper to leave that to the Reader's own Judgment. He will easily find that, in regard to Theory, the Tendency of the whole is to shew the Harmony of the Divine Perfections in the Work of Man's Salvation; and that in regard to Practice, the whole

is calculated for proving the absolute Necessity of real and interiour Sanctity; as the Opinion of an exterior Imputation, which lulls so many into a false Security, is here refuted.

Those, who have hitherto been at a loss for any solid Satisfaction, concerning the Difference of Opinions between the antient and modern Divines, will certainly be pleased to find in these Letters some Explanation of so many Difficulties. If they do, the Truths contained in them, will stand in need of no other Apology.*

* Concerning Predestination and Universal Grace.



T H E



THE
INTRODUCTION.
BEING

A DISSERTATION *concerning*
the Nature of the DIVINE GOODNESS
and JUSTICE, *considered in their Origin.*

MANKIND are agreed, that the Ideas of *Goodness* and *Justice* are inseparably connected with the Idea of GOD ; but our Custom of setting those Attributes in opposition to each other, is a proof that we are Strangers to their nature.

We usually say, That *Justice* gives way to *Goodness*, or *Goodness* gives place to *Justice* ; but the Knowledge of the *Unity* of GOD will make this false Notion fall to the ground ; and satisfy us, that the Distinctions we make between the Divine Attributes proceed from the narrow Limits of our Understanding, which is obliged to consider the different Parts of a *Whole* successively, not being able to fix them to a Point without being dazzled with them.

We find it easy to conceive *Goodness* distinguished from *Justice* ; and hence imagine, that they are so far from being one and the same, that there is even a considerable Difference

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rence betwixt them. If we survey them in another light, and trace them up to their Origin, we shall, perhaps, find that *Goodness* is as it were the Center of *Justice*; the latter losing itself in the former: In a word, that the Idea of *Goodness* presents to the Mind something more fixed and positive than the Idea of *Justice*, separately consider'd.

Let us then represent to ourselves the Infinite Being in the Eternity, prior to the Existence of Time, before any Creature came out of his hands. Let us represent to ourselves, I say, the self-sufficient Being, designing to form intelligent Beings; let us suppose ourselves acquainted with this Purpose before it was put in execution: what can we presume concerning the State of those new Beings, that are to come from the hands of a perfectly happy Being, but that they will be render'd as happy, as their finite Capacities can admit of?

The Idea of *Happiness* is the only one that offers itself essentially in this Case; indeed that of *Perfection* is here also included: but this Idea of *Perfection* has something equivocal in it, whereas that of *Happiness* has nothing like it. Man aspires precisely and absolutely after *Happiness*; but after *Perfection*, only as it leads to, or makes a part of that *Happiness*.

What then must be the Origin of the *Happiness* of created Beings? It will essentially be the *Happiness* which God enjoys. The
perfectly

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perfectly happy Being, wanting nothing for himself, cannot create Beings with a View of making an addition to his own Felicity. In forming them after his own Image, he can have no other design than that of making them happy, as he himself is; I mean, suitably to the Proportion between *Finite* and *Infinite*.

Hence it follows, that the Idea of infinite Goodness is inseparable from that of an infinitely happy Being; and that whatever proceeds from such a Being, must necessarily partake of his *Happiness*. The pure and perfect *Good*, cannot do or confer any thing but what is good; and did it communicate any thing else, it would be inconsistent with itself.

This undoubtedly is the principal Idea, that offers itself to the Mind concerning the Deity, and the End he may have in view in bringing Creatures into Being; which Idea is not equivocal, but positive and unchangeable: but the same cannot be said of the Idea of *Justice*; it having nothing in it of a positive nature: so that should we suppose Creatures do not yet exist, 'tis plain we can have no distinct Idea of it.

'Tis the Existence of Creatures then, which affords the distinct Idea of *Justice*. From the first moment of their Existence, till they become culpable, the Notion of Rigour or Severity never enters into the Idea of *Justice*; God is acknowledged to be *Just* and *Equitable*, though he should never give Proofs of his Severity.

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'Tis true indeed, we have not a very distinct Idea of the manner how *Justice* might have been exercised on, or manifested to, innocent Creatures. But, let us substitute the Term *Equity* instead of *Justice*, and we shall see that God might have shewn himself *equitable* towards the Innocent, by the Equality or Proportion which he might establish among them, according to the use they should make of their Liberty. I don't pretend fully to resolve this Difficulty; but it is certain, that *Equity* has always existed in God; whereas Rigour is merely accidental, and would never have been, had not Creatures deviated from their primitive Integrity.

Equity therefore constituting, without dispute, the very Essence of *Justice*; I'd ask, whether infinite Goodness and perfect *Equity* don't harmoniously agree? And whether they can be set in opposition, according to the generally received Opinion?

But here, perhaps, it may be objected,
 " That the Nature of Goodness is always to
 " communicate something of it's self; and
 " yet *Equity* often requires that Men should
 " be punished severely. In which Case,
 " *Goodness* must needs suspend its Effects,
 " and give way to those of *Justice*."

I have already said, that this way of conceiving things proceeds from the Narrowness of our Understanding: but in order to evince this, let us only call to mind the grand Principles wherein we are all agreed;
 that

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that GOD is as essentially *Good* or *Beneficent*, as he is essentially *Happy*.

From hence it follows, that boundless Goodness can never cease to will and actually do good to every Creature, as far as it is capable of receiving it. Besides (if we have a just Notion of the matter) it will likewise follow, that *Equity* or *Justice* are nothing but Agents of the very same Goodness, which in the end concur to render Mankind happy.

This Idea may appear singular, till it is illustrated by the following Reflections. Is it not agreed, that the Deity is uniform in his *Design*; and that this Design must be invariable, to be worthy of its Author? If therefore the Deity has but one Design with respect to Mankind, namely, to render them happy; why may not he make the different, nay the seemingly incompatible Means, which he shall employ, concur to the same End? And may we not justly say, that it is infinite Goodness, which acts, orders, and disposes of all these Events, to bring Mankind at last to their allotted Happiness.

Hence it follows, that the Effects of Sovereign Goodness are never suspended, but that we even share of them, when under what we term Correction or Punishment. Nor is this entirely incomprehensible; we see some Resemblance of it in the Chastisements that Paternal Affection inflicts. The Application is here superfluous.

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This Idea of unlimited Goodness, founded upon the Felicity of an absolutely happy Being, is easily conceived; Men, as bad as they are, find within themselves some Traces, tho' partly defaced, that bear witness to this Truth. A Man, who has not quite extinguished common Humanity, or banished it from his Breast, were he able to produce a Set of Creatures from nothing; such a Man, I say, when he consults himself, must always feel a Disposition to employ the whole compass of his Power to render them happy; and did he himself enjoy some Bliss, he'd take a pleasure in making them partakers of it. I'd fain ask any Person capable of Thought and Reflection, if this is not his own way of Thinking; and, supposing he had the power of producing Creatures, without being able to make them happy, whether he would not chuse to drop this Design, and forbear to exercise this supposed Power.

Thus the Deity, by the small Portion of Benevolence we feel in ourselves, invites us to judge how far his own immense Goodness may reach*. What a number of Consequences might be hence deduced!

But here perhaps the following Objection may be started. "The Idea, which you
" have given us of Infinite Goodness, as a
" Consequence of God's Felicity, seems fixed
" and unalterable, when consider'd in its Ori-
" gin; good Sense espouses it, without the
" least

* St. Matthew, ch. vii. 11.

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“ least difficulty: but when we descend to a
 “ detail of the Events, that the Deity has ei-
 “ ther ordained or permitted; when we look
 “ into what he has revealed to Men concern-
 “ ing their Future State, this first Idea of im-
 “ mense Goodness disappears; and nothing re-
 “ mains but an Idea of *Justice*, or rather *Se-*
 “ *verity* employ’d in punishing Mankind:
 “ and if there are any traces of the supreme
 “ Goodness yet remaining, it is that of a par-
 “ tial Goodness, confined to an inconsidera-
 “ ble number of Subjects, and limited, for the
 “ greatest part of Mankind, to the short space
 “ of this Life, after which there is no room
 “ left for Hope.

“ This difficulty would gain additional
 “ Strength by an enumeration of a great ma-
 “ ny Events since the Creation of Man. Not
 “ to insist on this Question, *viz.* Why did
 “ not God prevent the Fall of the first Man?
 “ a much more perplexing Objection offers
 “ it self, *viz.* That God has permitted all
 “ Men from the beginning to the end of the
 “ World should spring from that miserable
 “ Stock: that these Persons, who are innocent
 “ of the Transgression of their first Parents,
 “ are at their very birth placed in a State of
 “ Misery: that they are wretched before they
 “ are guilty; and that to inhance their Mife-
 “ ry, they are not able to avoid it, by reason
 “ of a chain of corrupt Inclinations which
 “ appear in them: for where is the Man who
 “ does not more or less feel their fatal Effects?

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“ This State of Misery would still be tolerable, were it confined to the short Period of this Life; but to compleat the Misery, to which nothing is comparable, all Men, as soon as they come into the World, are not only laid under a necessity of suffering and dying at last, but are also exposed to the terrible risque of eternal Damnation; which of itself is such a frightful Scene of Misery, that we find no Appearance of Infinite Goodness here *; even Equity and Justice vanish; and Man seems to have reason to upbraid the Creator for giving him Existence †.

“ What now (continues the Objector) will become of the grand Principles which you have laid down and traced up to their very Source? those unchangeable Principles of immense Goodness, which we imagined to be indisputable, and of whose Effects all created Beings are for ever to share.”

This Difficulty is so strong, that it destroys itself; it proves infinitely too much ‡; it would

* The Objector is supposed to build his Argument, upon the old System of the Eternity of Hell-Torments.

† To be necessarily created miserable, and to run the risque of being so for ever, is a Thought that no-body can give into; for all the Ideas of Equity we are Masters of, fly in the face of it.

‡ A Difficulty advanced against so clear a Principle, as that of the Divine Goodness, falls to the ground of its own accord; and the stronger it appears to be, we may be assured it is built upon a false Principle. Now this Difficulty depends on the Eternity of Hell-Torments;

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would overthrow all Religion, whereof the Idea of God, ought to be the Basis: it would give the lye to the Voice of universal Nature, of Conscience and common Sense itself; all which unanimously conspire to bear witness to the infinite Goodness. This same Voice of common Sense does likewise teach us, that the Ideas we have of perfect Goodness, are not in the least our Works, but must have a superiour *Cause* and *Origin*; and since Man is not this *Cause* and *Origin*, they must proceed from the Author of his Being. In consequence of which, I ask, whether it be reasonable to suspect those Traces imprinted in us by his hand in indelible Characters, or smother undoubted Evidence, to make room for Difficulties, built upon Principles that are, at least, equivocal, if not perhaps without any Foundation.

“ But here it may be again asked, How will
 “ you vindicate the Divine Goodness in a great
 “ many instances, that are not equivocal, and
 “ whose dismal Effects we ourselves actually
 “ feel ?”

Not to enter upon a detail of numberless things, whose Springs I am unacquainted with, I'll go higher and build on a *sure Foundation*; I judge of Uncertainties by what is certain; and that in proportion to my knowledge of it. Of which, take the following example :

I look upon the Idea of Infinite Goodness, as
here

ments; put the Case that this Supposition is groundless, then the Difficulty is removed, as will be shewn presently.

here described, to be a certain Principle, and make it the Basis of the Judgments I form on equivocal Effects, whose End I cannot explain.

The state wherein the first Man was placed, has nothing in it, but what perfectly corresponds with this Principle of Sovereign Goodness; but the miserable State into which he soon fell, not being prevented by the Interposition of the same Goodness, this dire Event (I say) is shocking.

I place this Event among the Effects, whose Causes are hid from me; I know not how far God ought to go in putting the Liberty, he had bestowed on Man, to the trial. Here I meet with Uncertainty and Obscurity in several respects; and therefore go back to what is *certain*, and what Uncertainty cannot shake. Hence I conclude, that one day Men will know that infinite Goodness never was inconsistent with itself, not even in this Event, which at present they alledge makes against it.

However, if we view the matter in another light, it is easy to conceive how *Adam* being placed in a *happy* Situation, and freely wandering out of the way, could not but fall into *Evil*; it is just, that Man's Condition should have a Tincture of the choice he has made; and what we call Justice, if rightly understood, is nothing but a natural and unavoidable Effect of the good or bad Disposition, which he has more or less freely contracted. Goodness, always agreeing with Justice, does not oppose the natural course, which such and such Effects

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fects ought to have; and should it act thus, it must invert the Order of things, which possibly might prove to the disadvantage of Mankind: but what Goodness never fails in, is the setting all Engines to work for repairing the damage Man has done himself; this end it never loses out of sight; and makes even those dismal Effects, whose destructive cause we lament, concur in the same design.

'Tis true indeed, that nothing seems more opposite to Immense Goodness, than the wretched Condition in which all the Posterity of *Adam* are born. Here again God has not thought proper to invert the Order of Nature. He might, says one, have deprived *Adam* of Life, and created a second Man to be the Father of a happy Posterity. But do we know whether it would have been consistent with the Divine Wisdom and Goodness to have proceeded in that manner? Are we acquainted with all the means, which the Deity has in his hands, for sooner or later more than infinitely compensating the miserable State, into which Mankind are necessarily born?

Here again we may judge of Uncertainty by what is certain. The *Uncertainty* is the condition of Mankind in the Life to come; the *Certainty*, on one hand, is their Condition in this Life, and, on the other, the Purpose of God to render them all happy. It is certain, the Design of God must be accomplished sooner or later; and since 'tis evident, that it is not accomplished in this Life, consequently, it is

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reserved for the Life to come. That Time which appears to us uncertain (and which is so to us in some degree, with respect to Circumstances) ceases so to be in its *Issue*.

Another Remark that presents it self here, is, that Man, being at his birth placed in a State of Misery, before he could deserve it, Goodness, nay Equity it self, require that the State of Happiness for which he was created, should infallibly wait for him at the end; that his last Condition should necessarily be happy, as his first was miserable for a time, before his Liberty could be the cause of it. We may even presume, that boundless Goodness will make this transient State of Misery an Enhancement of Happiness; so that Men, having experienced Pain, will be thereby susceptible of a greater degree of Bliss, than they could have been, had they not passed thro' such a State.

Without this Restoration, the Recompence would be imperfect, and not answerable to the Idea of Goodness, as we have just now established it. Men might complain, that they have necessarily suffered Ills, from which God could have secured them; or that they have not availed to render them happier at last: Here, the Danger of being eternally miserable vanishes; it is not even conceivable how such a Thought has been able to enter into the Mind of Man*: This Danger, however, is the Soul
of

* Let us suppose a Man, who has some Idea of Infinite Goodness, but has never heard talk of a miserable Eternity; how do we imagine, such a Man would relish

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of the greatest Difficulties that can be raised against the Idea of the Infinite Goodness. This Danger not being admitted, the latter State of Man is ascertained; and as he was originally created for Happiness, so that Happiness does infallibly wait him. The Design of God apparently suspended for a time by the Calamities of human Life, prevails, and is fully accomplished.

It will be granted, that this Plan is worthy of God, and its End above all fully satisfactory.

But still it may be objected, “ That in order to arrive at this happy End, there is a
 “ terrible Interval; the unavoidable Miseries of the present Life are light, and will
 “ soon have an end; but the additional Prospect of future Sufferings, the end of which
 “ we know not, is terrible. Would it not be
 “ more worthy of immense Goodness to exempt Men from all manner of Punishment
 “ after this Life, since they were formed and
 “ infallibly destined for Bliss? Why does not
 “ that

relish the first Proposal of it? What Horror would not such an Image give him? He would conclude; that those who admit of such a State, have a God different from his: that they never were acquainted with the immense Goodness of the supremely happy Being. He would even conjecture, that those who espouse this Opinion, feel not within themselves those Characters of Beneficence which are inseparable from human Nature..

In reality, this strange Opinion degrades the Divine Goodness, and places it below Human Goodness. It even supposes, that God could not foresee what would befall the Work of his own Hands; that he ventured to give Being to an infinite Number of Creatures, without any Certainty of being able to make them happy.

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“ that now actually happen, which one day
 “ will certainly be brought about * ?”

This question amounts to the same as that concerning the Fall of the first Man; Why did not God prevent his making that use of his Liberty? or rather, why did he create him a free Agent? For a confined Liberty is no Liberty. Such Difficulties as these take their rise from our Ignorance and our short-sighted Views of things. A Being without Liberty would no longer be Man; and then we might ask, why God thought fit to make Men.

But not to dwell any longer upon uncertain Speculations, let us return to a certain Principle. It is certain, that infinite Goodness cannot make a present of any thing to Man but what is for his good. Since therefore it has endowed him with Liberty, and this Gift might, by accident, prove prejudicial to him; it follows necessarily, that it is in itself so essential to his Nature, that Divine Wisdom could not divest him of it, without divesting him of the Quality of Man; we likewise clearly see, that the Good accruing to him from it must infinitely surpass the Damage he may possibly sustain from it; without which we may presume, that Divine Wisdom and Goodness would never have made him a present of so pernicious a nature. I

* How shall we reconcile Men's Ideas of the Goodness of God? According to some, 'twould be agreeable to Infinite Goodness to exempt Men from all manner of Pain after this life; according to others, eternal Torments are no ways inconsistent with the very same Goodness.

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I pass by all that may be said of the Advantages of Liberty. But it must be acknowledged, that how great soever they are supposed to be, if this same Liberty put Man in danger of eternal Damnation, he might justly complain of it as a fatal Gift. It is in vain to say, that without this Liberty, Man would be incapable of Happiness; for he would certainly prefer Insensibility, and even Annihilation, to a wretched Eternity, or the bare Dangers of it. This, by the by, may shew us how full this Opinion is of insurmountable Difficulties.

I come now to the other part of the Objection. "Does this gloomy Interval, which we see betwixt us and the reserved Bliss, agree with the Idea of Sovereign Goodness*?"

I answer, That this Interval is by no means the Work of God, he has not fixed the Term of it, but has left that in our own power; it depends purely on ourselves to hasten on that happy Time, that State of Felicity which is already purchased for us; there is nothing wanting, but for us to acquire a Capacity of enjoying

* We have already observed, that God does not invert natural Order; this would be a denial of the Wisdom which reigns in all his Works. In order to make Men actually happy, notwithstanding their inward Disorder, *Good* and *Evil* must change their Nature; so that *Good* would not naturally make us happy, nor *Evil* naturally render us miserable. Infinite Goodness cannot set itself in opposition to this Order, without which every thing would be put in confusion. All it can do for Man, is not to abandon him in the Misery, wherein he has involved himself, and afford him the means of recovering from it.

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enjoying it, and for this end to make use both of our Liberty, and all other Means that are put in our hands*. Every thing on God's part contributes to our Assistance; he makes even the Miseries of Life, which are Consequences of the Fall of the first Man, concur to the same end†.

Here Man himself is the Disposer of his own Lot; not indeed for Eternity, but at least for a Season; that is, it is in his power to aggravate and prolong his Pain, or on the contrary to shorten it ||. The use of his Liberty determines

* The Liberty of Man requires, that God should make use of means to reduce him to order. Every sudden Change would annihilate the Exercise of his Liberty; should God operate directly on Man's Will, all use of Means would be superfluous. If such Changes were suited to his Nature, and were better for him than the use of indirect Means, God would be wanting in Goodness to deny him them; and Men might complain, that they have a long and painful Journey to take, which God could have freed them from, by transforming them on a sudden.

† The Miseries of Life that some undergo, being excessive, are a strong Demonstration of the Necessity of indirect Means. Would the Divine Goodness allow Men to suffer so many Calamities, if it could exempt him from them, and if those very Means did not indirectly concur to restore him to Happiness? Doth not the unequal Distribution of Happiness and Misery in this Life, give us a glimpse of what must pass hereafter, of what they are to expect after this Life, who have made it their chief Business to enjoy the Pleasures of this World?

|| The present Life is the Season in which, by the good or bad Use of Time, we may shorten or prolong the Miseries of a future State. For we shall reap in the other World, what we have sown in this.

determines it, and no Fate necessarily makes this Liberty hurtful to him ; he is too well satisfied, that he is the Master of it ; and when he would complain of this Gift of Heaven, he feels himself self-condemned.

Man, 'tis true, takes a pleasure in disputing with God, and demanding a Reason for his Conduct ; God condescends to justify his Measures towards Man ; he declares his Intention, and asks him, *Are not my Ways equal ?* Ez. xviii. 25. But Man frequently refuses to acquiesce and acknowledge the Justice of his Proceedings. In the Life to come, he shall yield the Cause to his Judge, *Rom. iii. 4.* and no more accuse God of being Author of his Misery, but lay the blame at his own door.

In short, when by the Destruction of *Evil*, which has rendered him miserable, he shall become capable of the Happiness for which he was created, then he will know this Immense Goodness he so long mistook. He will acknowledge it the only Cause both of his *Being*, and of the *Felicity* he enjoys. *Justice* itself will be display'd before his Eyes as the *Agent* of *Goodness*, concurring with it in the Destruction of *Evil* ; he will be convinced, that none of his Sufferings were useless, and that the pains he has endured were either the unavoidable Consequence of the Abuse of his Liberty, or necessary Means that Divine Wisdom and Goodness have employed for reducing him to Order.

Then that Eternity, which shall succeed
Time,

Time, will be essentially agreeable to the Eternity which preceded it; nor will there be any other difference, than the Existence of an infinite number of Beings that did not exist in the former; but all those Beings will be the Images of the sovereignly happy Being. They will all partake of his Bliss in the degree and measure proportioned to their several Capacities; they will rejoice at having received a Being, and perhaps even at their having experienced what Pain is. They will admire *perfect Equity* in the infinite Proportions it has established among intelligent Creatures; and the entire Compensation of the *Good* and *Bad* things of this Life, with those of the Life to come. The Idea of *Severity* will no longer enter into that of *Justice*, and *Wisdom* having answered the designs of sovereign Goodness in restoring all things to Order, God will review the *Workmanship of his Hands*, as he did in the Beginning, and pronounce it *very Good*.

LETTER I.

In which a Principle is laid down for understanding the Scripture, which is applicable to the Question in hand.

S I R,

YOU seem'd surprized the other day, when I happened to say in Conversation, that the Doctrine of the Eternity of Hell-Torments was not so incontestable, as not to be

be called in question by a great number of judicious Men. To this you opposed the repeated Expressions in Scripture of *eternal Fire*, of the *Worm that never dieth*, &c. I had not then time to answer your Objections; I now enter on that Task.

First then, I am to observe to you, that the Persons who are of this Opinion, most of whom are *English* Divines, maintain that, both in the *Greek* and *Hebrew*, the terms *Eternal*, *Eternity*, and *Never*, are very equivocal, most commonly signifying a long Period of Time, and sometimes an indefinite Time.

It is said, that the Slave should continue in his Master's House *for ever*. God promises to give the *Israelites* the Land of *Canaan* *forevermore*; and *Jeremy* speaks of the Temple and Sacrifices as of things that *never* were to be abolished, *Chap. xxxiii. 18*. Lastly, God swore to *David*, that a Successor upon his Throne should *never* fail. In all which Cases, 'tis evident, the words *Eternal*, *Never*, and *Always*, &c. cannot be understood in a strict, literal Sense.

Let us first agree upon an incontestable Principle for understanding the Scriptures. It contains Truths which we may call *Eternal* and *Unchangeable*, which are the Foundation of all the rest, independent of Expressions, Figures, Parables, &c. Of this sort are the *Spirituality*, *Eternity*, *Omnipotence* of God, and whatever else we can know of his Perfections. I call them *Unchangeable*, because they

they are imprinted on our very Nature in such a manner, that, though the Scriptures were lost, we should not be less certain of their Truth than we are at present.

Next to these, which serve as a Foundation to all the rest, we find likewise in Scripture, God's Design of saving and sanctifying Men through his Son.

These Truths, which are the Basis and Essence of all Religion, being once laid down, you will allow, Sir, that if the Scripture abounds with a prodigious number of figurative, allegorical, equivocal, and even contradictory Expressions; that we must judge of their true Sense, not by what the words seem to import, but by those unshaken Truths that can never vary.

Thus, what I know with certainty concerning the *Spirituality* of God, hinders me from taking literally what is said in several places, of his *Eyes, Hands, Nostrils, &c.* In like manner, what I know concerning his *Sanctity*, prevents my understanding in a literal Sense those Expressions which seem to ascribe to him the Passions of *Wrath, Jealousy, Fury, and Partiality*. This Rule is applicable to a thousand places of Scripture; and would clear up abundance of Difficulties, when rightly applied.

But to return to the Opinion in question, against which you produce the Expressions of *everlasting Fire, of the Worm that never dieth, &c.* I answer, (according to the Rule

I just now laid down) that when the Scripture seems to contradict itself in some places, we must not take any thing in a literal Sense, but what perfectly agrees with undoubted and fundamental Truths.

The first of these Truths, as I just now said, are all that we know of the Divine Perfections, whether by written Revelation, or by internal Testimony stamped on the Consciences of all Men.

The Truths of the second Rank, are such as we know only by Scripture-Testimony, and yet are perfectly connected with the former. Of this sort is the Declaration of GOD's Purpose of giving his Son for Mankind; a Purpose which places the *Sanctity, Justice, Wisdom and Mercy* of GOD, in the strongest Light.

Of the same kind is that Truth, attested and so positively repeated through the whole Scripture; that none can be admitted into perfect Bliss, unless he is cleansed *from all filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit*.

You understand by this time, Sir, the drift of what I have advanced. I now ask you, upon what bottom, the Proofs alledged to support the Eternity of Hell-Torments, are founded? Why, purely upon three or four Expressions of *Eternity, the Worm that never dieth*, &c. which, as I have already observed, may be taken in different Senses.

But what are the Supports of the contrary Opinion? Those very *unchangeable Truths*,

which are the *Basis* of all Religion ; and this I shall endeavour to illustrate.

GOD is *Wise*, *Just* and *Good* ; no one of his Attributes destroys another ; *Justice* is not opposite to *Goodness*, nor *Goodness* to *Justice*. I go one step farther, and say they are so inseparable, that we cannot so much as imagine, or suppose a Man to be *Just* unless he is *Good*, or *Good* unless he is *Just*.

In GOD, *Goodness* and *Justice* are boundless ; by his *Goodness*, he offers his Creatures all the Treasures of his Bliss ; by his *Justice* he fills with the same Treasures those who accept of them, and leaves those who refuse them, destitute of them : this is signified to us by these Words ; *All that are far from thee, shall perish*, Psal. lxxiii. And again, *Wo unto their Soul, for they have rewarded evil unto themselves*, Isa. iii. 9.

Divine Justice then is widely different from the Idea commonly formed of it : It is represented under the Notion of *Hatred*, *Vengeance*, *Wrath* and *Fury*, and therefore Goodness and Mercy are set in opposition to it, to prevent, as it were, the Effects of its rigid Severity. In reality, were *Justice* of such a nature, GOD must cease to be *Just*, whenever he exercises his *Goodness* ; or *Good* and *Merciful*, when he employs his *Justice* ; since it is evident that *Goodness* and *Wrath*, *Mercy* and *Revenge*, can never subsist together.

But, to form a right Idea of the Nature of *Divine Justice*, we ought to conceive that it
has

has nothing in it of threatning or severity ; it is represented to us under the figure of a perfectly equal Ballance, which inclines to one side only by the force of the weight put into one Scale. The Torments it seems to inflict upon Sinners, do not proceed from Justice, but from *themselves, who lay up Treasures of Wrath*, Rom. ii. They alone feed the *Worm*, that must gnaw them, and pile up combustible Materials for the *Fire* that must burn them ; as is well expressed in the Words of the Prophets ; *Isaiab l. 11. Walk in the Light of your Fire, and in the Sparks you have kindled ; and elsewhere, They have lighted the Fire in my Anger, wherefore he shall be burnt in my Rage.* I might cite thousands of Passages to prove this Truth, which of itself is well enough understood by the Conscience.

What are we to conclude from what I have advanced concerning the Nature of Justice ? If this Justice is not really attended, either with Hatred, Fury or Revenge *, but is inseparable from Infinite Goodness ; can we conceive it will condemn Millions of Creatures, formed after God's Image, to dreadful and never-ending Misery ; and even doom them to the Hatred of God, to Rage, to Despair, and Blasphemy for all Eternity ?

B 2

Might

* Justice is of so different a Nature from Revenge, that a Judge who should condemn a Malefactor to Punishment, on a Principle of Revenge, would be look'd upon as a Monster.

Might we not rather, on the contrary, say that the chief Business of this sovereign *Justice*, is to make *just* whatever is *unjust*, and render the *crooked straight*? What is more unjust and contrary to the Views of the Creator, than that Myriads of his Creatures should for ever hate him? I ask once more, can sovereign Justice will Injustice, or permit it to subsist to all Eternity?

What I have hitherto said, ought to be consider'd only as imperfect Proofs, or as a sort of Probabilities founded on bare good Sense and the Testimony of Conscience; or, to speak more properly, on the Ideas of Justice, which all of us find engraved in our Minds, and must necessarily be the Work of the Creator. From this Source we draw the Ideas of those Truths, which I call *eternal*, and *immutable*; viz. of GOD's Wisdom, Justice and Goodness; and to those he himself remits us, to determine betwixt him and us, concerning the Equity of his Conduct towards us, *Isaiah* v. *Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my Vine*; and again, *Ezek.* xviii. 29. *O house of Israel! Are not my Ways equal?* These Words suppose that the Rule, to which GOD sends all of us to measure whether his Ways are right, is right itself, being the Workmanship of his own Hand.

I should now proceed to some more positive Proofs of Holy Writ for the support of this Opinion; but as the Subject is too extensive to be crouded into a single Letter,
you'll

L E T T E R II. 29

you'll permit me to defer the discussion of it,
'till my next.

L E T T E R II.

*Wherein the Proofs taken from Scripture,
concerning the Design of the Incarnation
and Death of JESUS CHRIST,
are proposed.*

S I R,

TO satisfy your Demands, I shall here endeavour to lay down the Proofs, alledged for the support of the Opinion in question.

One of the chief of them, is drawn from the Incarnation of JESUS CHRIST, and the Design of his Coming.

A second, from the many positive Declarations wherewith the Scriptures abound,
That God will not always chide, nor keep his Anger for ever.

A third is taken from the numerous Prophetical Promises, agreeing with these first Proofs.

In the first place, That of the Incarnation of JESUS CHRIST seems to have great force in it, if we attend to it ever so little; for thereby he has ennobled all Human Nature, and become the * Brother of Mankind;

B 3

which

* Though the Son of God had not made so near an Approach to Mankind, as he has done by assuming human

which single Thought might be sufficient to make us to presume that none of that Race, whose Nature God assum'd, shall perish eternally.

But let us enter further into the Design of this Incarnation, and consider what the Scriptures teach us upon this Subject: they every where declare, that JESUS CHRIST came to *save all Men*; and this is repeated in almost every Page of the New Testament *. 'Tis true, that among the Divines who maintain the Eternity of Torments, those called *Particularists*, understand by *all Men*, the Elect chosen out of all Nations; and the *Universalists*, take the Words, as a Proof that GOD offers all Men the Grace necessary for Salvation: but such Divines as deny the Eternity of Hell-Torments, and have a better Title to the denomination of *Universalists* than the former, believe that GOD, declaring his desire that *all Men should be saved*, will accomplish it in its utmost Extent. It expresses, say they, a positive Will, which

sooner human Nature, the bare Relations between Man and the Divinity would have been a very strong Proof on this Occasion. St. Paul confirms what the Pagans acknowledged, that Men are not only the *Work of God*, but also *his Race*. What Consequences might not be drawn from that Expression?

* It is surprizing that this Expression of *all Men*, a thousand times repeated in Scripture, should make no Impression on the Minds of Men; while those of *Eternity*, and *for ever*, have been received without restriction; though it is evident, that the words last mentioned are used in Scripture, when speaking of Things now ended.

sooner or later will have its Effect, and not a bare Wish that all Men may be saved.

Let us come to something more particular. JESUS CHRIST came to restore all things ; of which mention is made, *Acts* ii. But if he saves only a small Number, all things are so far from being restored, that there would be but a handful so favoured, whilst the multitude would continue eternally in Disorder and Desolation.

No sooner did *Adam* fall, but the Promise of Salvation was made to him, and in him to all his Posterity, whom he represented ? *St. Paul* is very exprefs on this Subject, *1 Cor.* xv. 22. *As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.* This Proof is, I think, one of the strongest, by the comparison made between *Adam* and *Christ*. Therefore as it is past dispute, that in *Adam* all die, so it is unexceptionably true * that in *Christ* all shall be made alive.

But what the Apostle subjoins is a Proof, that this will happen at very different Periods. *But every Man* (says he, *v.* 23.) *in his own Order : Christ the First-fruits ; afterwards they that are Christ's, at his coming.* It is plain that by this coming, he means the last Judgment ; and by those that are Christ's,

B 4

the

* Here the Words *all Men* cannot possibly be understood in an equivocal Sense, like the Terms *Eternity* and *for Ever* ; because, if we may believe the Apostle, it is as certain that all Men shall be restored by *Christ*, as it is evident they are All become Mortal through *Adam*.

the Souls of the Just : Nevertheless, he afterward speaks of another future Period, which he calls the End, v. 24. *And then the End shall come, when he shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even to the Father.* But what is this End ? *That all Things should be subjected to him,* ver. 28. But is it a forced or voluntary Subjection ? If the former, he would never speak of it as a thing to come ; because from the Foundation of the World all things are subject to him ; if the latter, there is no more Hell.

What followeth, seems to prove this very clearly ; *The last Enemy that shall be destroyed* (says St. Paul) *is Death.* Is the separation of the Soul from the Body, the *Death* here meant ? No ; for after the coming of *Christ*, there is no room for that *Death*. Besides, this separation is not what the Scripture calls *Death*, which is only termed *Sleep* ; and particularly in this Chapter, where the Apostle never speaks of the *Dead*, but under the notion of Persons fallen asleep ; but what he calls *Death*, the *great Death*, 2 Cor. i. 10. is a separation from GOD, which was the *Death* spoken of to *Adam*, *In the Day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.* And without this *Death* there would be no Hell ; so that when it is destroyed, Hell will be no more.

Another Proof, that the *Death* here mentioned, is not temporal *Death*, is, that St. Paul ranks it with the Enemies of GOD, over whom

whom JESUS CHRIST should reign 'till they were all destroyed : but temporal Death, far from being of the number of his Enemies, is an Agent of his Power employed in executing his Orders ; it is the spiritual Death which is called *Enmity against GOD*, a Rebellion of the Creature against the Creator ; it is this Death, I say, to which the Title of *Enemy* perfectly agrees.

Let us observe, that St. *Paul* supposes this Enemy shall subsist even after *Christ's* coming, and that he shall reign 'till it is abolished, as well as all *Rule*, and *Authority* and *Power*, 1 *Cor.* xv. 54. It is evident that these Titles of *Rule*, &c. can refer only to the Power of Darkness, and the Sovereignty of the Devil ; since all Earthly Dominion shall then have had an end. But what is to be the View of destroying all those Enemies ? It answers an End worthy of the wise Creator, that of *reuniting to himself* all his Creatures, by a voluntary Subjection. *After having reigned over them with a Rod of Iron*, Psal. ii. *and consumed them in his Wrath ; then the Son shall deliver up the Kingdom to his Father, that GOD may be All and in All* *.

These last Words seem irrefragably to prove the Abolition of Sin and Hell, and the Restoration of all the Creatures ; which is further confirmed by the Exclamation of St. *Paul*,

B 5

O

* These Words would have no Sense, if Hell-Torments were eternal. God can never be *All and in All*, but by restoring the Order of things.

O Death where is thy Sting? O Grave where is thy Victory? * If *Death* and the *Grave* have no other sting but Sin, and this sting must be destroyed; does it not hence follow, that *Hell* must be destroyed also? since 'tis certain, that if Sin were killed in Men, there would be no more *Hell*.

You'll grant, Sir, that this single Chapter would afford Arguments strong enough upon this Subject. But not to stop here, let us see whether the Scriptures do not teach the same Truth in other places.

St. *Paul*, in the first of *Colossians*, declares what was the good-pleasure of GOD in sending his Son into the World. *For it pleased the Father*, (says he) *that in him should all Fulness dwell; that by him, v. 20. he might reconcile all things to himself, whether they be things*
in

* We find it in other Translations, *O Hell where is thy Victory?* Common Sense should lead us to espouse this Version. We know the Scriptures promiscuously use the Words *Hell* and *Grave*; if the *Grave* signified nothing here but the Piece of Ground, where the dead Body is laid, how could this Exclamation be worse placed, in which St. *Paul* triumphs? After bidding defiance to *Death*, what could he mean by the *Grave*? Can we distinguish one from the other, and is the Victory over this Piece of Ground such a mighty Matter? But it may be said, perhaps, this is no Solution of the Difficulty. St. *Paul* triumphs over the *Grave* in relation to the Resurrection; it must then give up all the inclosed Dead, as well bad as good: A wonderful Subject of Triumph! The *Grave* will restore Men their Bodies, to feel the heat of everlasting Fire. Would the Resurrection in this Case be an Advantage to the Damned, and a Subject proper for an Apostle's Exultation?

in Heaven, or things on Earth. Observe here, an *Universal Reconciliation* of all the Creatures to GOD; a Truth as well ascertain'd in *verses 15, 16, 17, 18.* In the 15th and 18th, JESUS CHRIST is called the *first-born from the dead, and the first-born of every Creature, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence*; and in the 16th it is said, *That all things that were created by him, were also created for him.*

How is JESUS CHRIST the *first-born of every Creature*? He could not be so by his Divinity; for in this Sense he is not a Creature; nor by his Humanity, since an infinite number of Creatures were in being before his temporal Birth. If he is then *called the first-born of every Creature*; that Expression can signify only, that he is the *First-fruits* of them, the elder Brother; now, if the *First-fruits* are *holy, the Lump will be holy also*; and if the Son, as *Heir * of all things*, Heb. i. 2. *has asked all the Ends of the Earth for his Inheritance*, Psal. ii. is it not to reconcile them to GOD, by translating them from the Power of Darkness?

In the first of *Ephesians*, the same Truth is declared. Ver. 9, 10. mention is made of the

B 6

Mystery

* The Psalm from whence this is taken, deserves to be quoted more at large. The Son of God is introduced declaring the Power God had given him to ask an important Favour of him, *Ask of me, and I shall give thee the Heathen for thine Inheritance, and the uttermost Parts, &c.* What Design shall we ascribe to the Son of God in a request of such a nature?

Mystery of the Will of GOD, which he hath hitherto kept to himself; and what is this Mystery? To gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on Earth, even in him; and when will he do this? In the dispensation of the fulness of Times, that is to say, When all things shall be subjected to him, and he shall be exalted above all Principalities and Powers, and Dignities and Dominions, and above every Name that is named, both in this Life and that which is to come.

The same *Apostle*, in the 11th of the *Romans*, declares as a great Mystery, that those who before had rebelled against GOD, and been cut off because of their Unbelief, should be again grafted in, and at last obtain Mercy; to which he adds, *GOD hath concluded them all under Unbelief, that he might have mercy on all.* After which he makes this Exclamation, wherein much more is understood than expressed, *O the depth both of the Riches and Wisdom of GOD! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his Counsellor?*

Let us here remark the relation these Words bear to those quoted from the 1st of *Eph.* concerning the Will of GOD, which 'till now he had kept within his own Breast, and which is nothing but the thought of a Saviour, or the design he had conceived of Mercy to all; which is evident from the Conclusion,
For

For of him, and by him, and for him are all things, &c..*

It would be easy here to quote still a great many other Passages to the same purpose, as *Heb. ii. 9.* where it is said that **JESUS CHRIST** *tasted Death for all Men*; and elsewhere, *That he is made the propitiation for the Sins of the whole World.* And in the 2d. of *Phil.* *That every Knee shall bow at the Name of JESUS, of things in Heaven, &c.*

I shall only dwell a little on the last Verses of the 5th of *Romans*, that are very clear in this Case; where the Apostle compares **JESUS CHRIST** to *Adam*, as also the Fruits we reap from each. *As by one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin, so that Death is passed upon all Men; in like manner by the † Righteousness of one, the Gift is come upon all Men to Justification of Life.* For adds he, *As by the Disobedience of one, many, &c.*

The Word *many* in this place, undoubtedly comprehends all Mankind; *All were made Sinners by Adam, therefore all ought to be made Righteous by JESUS CHRIST.*

And

* If whatever exists *of him and by him*, ought to be *for him*, what can we think will be the final State of Men, who derived their Existence from him, and by whom alone they subsist?

† *St. Paul* in the 15th Verse, exalts the Gift above the Offence; he observes that the Gift ought to have more influence to make us happy, than the Offence to make us miserable. If the Effects of the Offence were universal, what may we not expect from the Gift, if it ought to exceed it?

And here we may very justly apply that excellent but abused Text: *Where Sin did abound, Grace did much more abound.* That is, the Grace of CHRIST JESUS is so abundant, that it shall at last destroy in all Mankind the Sins they inherited from *Adam*; so that *as Sin has reigned unto Death, in like manner Grace should reign by Righteousness unto Eternal Life.* As if he had said, the Reign of *Sin* and *Death* must come to an end, to make room for that of *Grace* through all Eternity.

I believe, Sir, it would be superfluous, to add more Authorities to what I have now produced; since these include the most distinct and clear Instructions deliver'd, concerning the Design of the Incarnation and Death of JESUS CHRIST.

L E T T E R III.

Wherein the Sense of the Conclusion of the Second Commandment is examined, and new Reflections concerning the Nature of Justice are drawn from it.

S I R,

I Told you, that a second Argument for the Opinion in question, is taken from the express Declarations in Scripture, That GOD keeps not his Resentment for ever. I shall now enquire into the Strength of this Proof.

And

And here I find, toward the Conclusion of the Second Commandment, a positive Declaration of the eternal Laws of Justice and Mercy. In the first Part, God shews himself as a powerful and jealous God, punishing Iniquity to the fourth Generation; in the last, he is represented as *exerting Mercy to thousands of Generations*. Doth not this mean, that Justice in his Punishments is restrained within certain Bounds, whereas Mercy knows no Limits?

But to this it may be objected, That if any Bounds could be set to Divine Justice, what becomes of the Infinity of God's Perfections? To which I answer, That Divine Justice, considered in itself, is without Bounds; but that its Infinity does not consist in punishing to the same extent; but rather in being *infinitely equitable*, entering into an infinite Detail of what can render every Creature more or less culpable, and more or less pardonable: in weighing, with a perfectly *equal* Balance, not only Actions, but particularly Intentions, Motives, Knowledge, Circumstances, Temptations; in a word, in entering into the *infinite Proportions* of Rewards and Punishments, so that it inclines not to one side more than the other. Now, was it to punish infinitely, there must needs be a heavier weight in the Scale of Rigour, than in that of Clemency, which cannot suit with the Idea of Justice.

Rigour indeed must be exercised against all Disobedience and Unrighteousness; but when
by

by its devouring Fire, it hath entirely consumed them, *Justice* shall cease to be *rigorous*, but not cease to be *just*.

But to return to the Conclusion of the Second Commandment; I do not suppose any one pretends to take the Words literally, or imagines that God makes Children accountable for the Iniquities of their Fathers; seeing it is evident that this is only a way of speaking, which gives us to understand, that there is no manner of Proportion between the Duration of Punishments inflicted by Justice, and that of the Effects of Mercy.

But how can this Truth be reconciled with the Opinion of eternal Torments? In that case, except the small Number of the Elect, who are but a Handful in comparison of all Mankind, God would shew his Mercy to the rest, during the short Space of this Life only; after which, he would pour out upon them all the Rigour of his Vengeance, not for Thousands and Millions of Generations, which would be saying nothing, but after all those Ages are past, the Eternity of their Torments would still be to commence again.

Let us likewise consider, to what purpose Mercy should be exercised during this Life, towards these miserable Creatures; toward far greater number, who are Pagans, to give them Life, Nourishment, Cloathing, natural Light, and a Sense of Conscience. The Christians are infinitely more favoured, by being instructed in the Will of God, in all respects,

L E T T E R IV. 41

respects, who in this Life provides them with all Means necessary to Salvation.

These, I must acknowledge, are great effects of *Mercy*, which render the latter obnoxious to Judgment and Hell, if they abuse them; but how considerable soever the Effects of Mercy may be in this Life, though it should continue a thousand or ten thousand Years, yet it would bear no manner of proportion to an Eternity of Torments; that which is *finite*, bearing no manner of proportion to what is *infinite*: so that we must alter the Text, and say, That God shews *Mercy to the fourth*, but *punishes to the thousandth Generation*; which indeed would be saying nothing, since any imaginable number, though equal to the Drops of the Ocean, would vanish before *endless Ages*.

I believe, Sir, I have said enough upon this Sentence of the Second Commandment, and must reserve for another Letter the Citation of some other Passages of Scripture, which confirm the same Truth.

L E T T E R IV.

*Being an Analysis of the 107th Psalm, and
Remarks on those Words, He will not
always chide, &c. Psal. ciii.*

S I R,

THE Scriptures are so full of Declarations of the same stamp, with the Conclusion

clusion of the Second Commandment, that I am at a loss only which to chuse. To avoid being tedious, I shall confine myself to those that are most express on the Subject.

First, then, I find the whole 107th *Psalms*, which, by a kind of Allegory, sets before our Eyes a Representation of the wonderful Ways of the Divine Wisdom, Justice, and Mercy. The first Verse is as it were an Abridgment of the whole, *O give Thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; because his Mercy endureth for ever.* What does this Declaration teach us? That immense Goodness is not confined to the short space of this Life*, since it endureth for ever, it must certainly be employed in the Life to come, for the benefit of such Subjects as shall be capable of receiving its Influence.

But who are those Subjects? The same *Psalms* is very express on that Article; they are such as having been Rebels against the strong God, have been humbled, mortified, and crushed by the Severity of Justice; who have felt inexpressible Anguish on the account of their Transgressions; who have been as it were *chain'd up in Darkness, bound with Affliction.*

* Nothing is more contrary to good Sense, than to confine the Clemency and Mercy of God to the Space of this Life, which is only the first Hour of Man's Duration. Will a different manner of existing, place him out of the reach of the effects of a Goodness, which is eternally the same? Doth the Separation of the Soul from the Body make it cease to be the Work of God, and such a Work as he cannot abandon?

tion and Iron, and shut up within Gates of Brass; who have gone down into the Depths, and whose Souls have been melted, because of Trouble: such, I say, having fed plentifully on the Fruit of their Works, and born the Punishment of their Sins, shall be the Objects of this Goodness, that endures for ever; They shall cry unto the Lord in their Distress, and he will bring them out of their Trouble, and will rescue them from Darknes, and the Shadow of Death, and break their Bands in sunder.

But whither tend all these wonderful Proceedings of Justice and Mercy? To the Accomplishment of that authentic Declaration; *Every Tongue shall give Praise to God, and celebrate the Goodness of the Lord, and his wondrous Works towards the Sons of Men.*

The Psalm ends much the same way as it began; *Whoso is wise, and will observe those things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord;* as if he had said, Let them consider that this Goodness, which lasts for ever, cannot be inactive, but will be employed on the Sons of Men, in proportion as they shall be more or less disposed to receive its benign Effects.

One of the strongest Expressions against the Eternity of Torments, is this, *He will not always chide, nor keep his Anger for ever**: a Declaration more strong, and the further removed

* A Father doth not chide his Children, whom he is resolved to abandon; by chiding he shows his Design of correcting and reducing them to their Duty.

removed from Ambiguity, as it is taken from the Nature and Perfections of God himself, and perfectly agrees with the Ideas of Justice, which every one finds engraved upon his own Mind.

We are agreed, that *unchangeable Truths* ought to be our Rule for distinguishing what is to be taken in a literal Sense ; but when the Letter itself speaks in a manner conformable to those Truths, why should we not receive it in its full extent ? To say that this Declaration regards none but Believers, is shuffling out of the Difficulty by a very gross Evasion. Let us therefore suppose ourselves inclined to extol the Clemency of a King towards those who had offended him, and that we should give as an Evidence of it, *That he doth not always chide, or keep his Anger for ever* : Would this signify his pardoning three or four, whilst he exercised upon Millions, all the Vengeance in his power, without ever relenting * ? Who then can imagine, when God represents himself to his Creatures, as *not always chiding, or keeping Resentment for ever*, that he only means this for the small number of the Elect, whilst he avenges himself to all Eternity on infinite numbers of his Creatures ?

It

* A Man who is irreconcilable, instead of passing for just, is charged with Inhumanity. Our Saviour sets no Bounds to the Mercy which the just Man ought to show to his greatest Enemies. This alone, by way of consequence, would be sufficient, even though God had not explain'd himself by positively declaring, *he will not keep his Anger for ever.*

It remains, to make good my Engagement, that I should produce some Prophetical Promises consonant to the preceding Proofs; give me leave to refer that Article to another Letter.

L E T T E R V.

Wherein are produced the Prophetical Promises agreeing with the preceding Proofs.

S I R,

ALthough I have obliged myself to produce several Sentences or Promises out of the Prophetical Books, which may serve to support the Opinion in question, I should think them almost superfluous, after the preceding Proofs. Besides, whatever Arguments may be taken from the Prophets, ought to be look'd upon as conclusive only, so far as they agree both with the *unchangeable Truths* we have laid down as our Foundation, and with the exprefs and positive Declarations of the New Testament, that are not figurative. The Phraseology of the Prophets is so ambiguous and obscure, that unless we use the Rule which we have agreed on, and that with great Caution, we may run into a thousand Extravagancies, which we may suppose well grounded, under pretence of some Expressions, whose Meaning we do not comprehend.

I shall therefore employ the Authority of the Prophets only as collateral Testimonies
that

that are sufficient only, as they agree with the former Evidences.

I shall not attempt to cite all the Passages that might be of service to my Argument; that would be an endless Task; but content myself with examining the Spirit and Design of some Prophetical Promises according to the Rule of *unalterable Truths*, or of such as are clearly revealed to us.

The 40th of *Isaiab* might afford some Testimony in this respect; where there is a Promise of the Restoration of all things. What else can be meant by those Expressions, *That every Valley shall be exalted, and every Mountain and Hill shall be made low, and the Crooked shall be made strait, and the rough Places plain*; I say, what can be meant, but a spiritual Reparation relating to the Souls of Men?

It moreover appears, that this must be an universal Restoration, because it follows; *The Glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all Flesh shall see it*: as if he had said, It is the Sin and Corruption of Men, that obstruct the Manifestation of this Glory; but at last, those Obstacles being removed, *All Flesh, i. e.* all Men shall be Witnesses and Partakers thereof; which St. *John Baptist* repeats after *Isaiab*, in Terms still more express, *All Flesh* (says he) *shall see the Salvation of God*. Now every one knows, that in Scripture this way of speaking implies more than being a mere Spectator.

I know we may restrain the Meaning of those Words to something less general; and should any one dispute it with me, I'd easily give it up: but, as this Testimony by itself would be insufficient, so being ushered in by so many others, it ought not to stand for nothing.

Here is another of the same sort, *Isaiab* xlv. 23. *I have sworn by myself, the Word is gone out of my Mouth in Righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every Knee shall bow, every Tongue shall swear.* Ver. 24. *Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I Righteousness and Strength;* after which he concludes, *In the Lord shall all the Seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.* Which Testimony is so much the more to be regarded, as God here makes use of the most express and oftenest repeated Oath, and as the Phrases are not very figurative. The Apostle *St. Paul* quotes this Text in these words, *Rom. xiv. 11. Every Tongue shall give praise to God;* which sure cannot be applied to the Damned.

It appears likewise by this Abundance of *Righteousness* and *Strength* in God, that he gives us hereby to understand, that he is able at last to make all his Creatures *righteous*; and though he mentions none but the Posterity of *Israel*, if the Words are taken literally, yet even this will support my Argument; since it is beyond dispute, that the number of depraved *Israelites* vastly surpassed that of the Good. If therefore all *Israel*, according to

the Flesh, must be saved, *Rom. ii. 26.* it follows, that those who have been sometime rebellious and *lopt off*, shall be again grafted in, and called to Life. And is it not in this Sense, at least partly, that our Saviour represents himself to us, as *the Deliverer of the Captives*, who rescues Prisoners from their Confinement; as a Person, *Isaiah ix.* who *brings to light those who inhabited the Regions of the Shadow of Death?* And must not this be the Meaning of these otherwise obscure Words of the Prophet *Isaiah*, chap. xxiv. ver. 22. *They shall be gathered together, as Prisoners are gathered in the Pit, and shall be shut up in the Prison, and after many days shall they be visited.*

Having now said enough from *Isaiah*, let us see whether *Jeremiah* will furnish us with any thing to our present purpose. As he does not speak so clearly as *Isaiah*, and makes use of figurative Expressions, I shall offer only as so many Conjectures and Probabilities, whatever I observe from him.

Jeremy, in his 25th Chapter, makes an Enumeration of all Nations, beginning with *Jerusalem*, to which he presents, in the Name of God, the Cup of his Anger, and declares that *Jerusalem* shall drink of it first, and that all other Nations should infallibly do the same after her. Again, Chap. xlv. & seq. he addresses himself to each of those Nations in particular; and having denounced the Judgments prepared for them, he at last subjoins, *Yet will*

will I bring again the Captivity of Moab in the latter days. He says the same of *Egypt*, and the Children of *Ammon*. Let us now consider the Design of the Prophecy, and wave the Figure. If this Prophecy ought not to be confined to the literal Sense, but ought to be allowed a spiritual Sense, the following, in my opinion, might be given of it.

By the Nations in general, we may understand *all Mankind*, and by *Jerusalem* the Church; the Cup that she must drink of are *Afflictions*, or Operations of Divine Justice, to purify her; and this same Cup that all the other Nations shall be forced to drink of after her, are the Effects of the same Justice, which finding in them much more Matter to consume, shall therefore be infinitely more bitter.

That this is the true Sense of this Figure, we cannot well doubt, if we credit *St. Peter's* Explication of it, 1 Epist. chap. iv. ver. 17. *The Time, saith he, is come, that Judgment must begin at the House of God; and if it begin first at us, what shall the End of them be that obey not the Gospel of God?* But, to return to *Jeremy*; since after he had denounced those terrible Judgments against the rebellious Nations, he promises them *Deliverance* from their Captivity in the latter Days; may we not understand this of a spiritual Deliverance, and that the rather, because we have not seen those Prophecies fulfilled in the literal Sense?

We come next to *Ezekiel*, in the 16th Chapter of whose Prophecy there is an Allegory that may have some relation to the Argument we are upon, though it mentions it only figuratively. Figures themselves have their own *Design*, and *Truth*, which it is of importance to discover. Here I shall endeavour once more to propose my Conjectures.

The *Jewish Church* is here represented under the Emblem of an Adulteress, who had rendered herself so culpable by her base Conduct, that *Sodom* and *Samaria* are declared less criminal than she. After the most cutting Rebukes, GOD declares he will exercise his Fury and Jealousy upon her; in short, that *she shall bear the whole Punishment of her Iniquity*; nevertheless, he afterwards promises he will remember his Covenant, and establish it with her for ever, and even with *Sodom* and *Samaria*; ver. 55. *When thy Sister Sodom, and her Daughters, shall return to their former Estate, and Samaria and her Daughter shall return to their former Estate, then thou and thy Daughters shall return to your former Estate.* Now this seems to insinuate, that the Deliverance promised to *Jerusalem*, or the Church, shall one day be also extended to the most rebellious Nations, but yet with great difference in regard to Prerogatives. Ver. 61. *Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed when thou shalt receive thy Sisters, thine elder and thy younger, and I will give them*

them unto thee for Daughters, but not by thy Covenant. I know this may be explained of the Reception the *Jews* gave the *Gentiles*, who embraced Christianity; but, besides that those two Senses may both stand together, without destroying one another, and that the latter, which is particular, does not hinder a more universal Accomplishment; I shall not insist upon it, but propose it barely as a Conjecture.

Ezekiel furnishes us with some other Testimonies, in his 36th Chapter; where having upbraided the *Israelites* with their Infidelity, he declares that GOD will judge them according to their Ways, and punish their Misdeeds; but at last, ver. 21. he promises, *That he will bring them back from their Captivity, and sprinkle clean Water upon them, and give them a new Heart, and cleanse them from all their Filthiness.* And ver. 35. *That the Land that was desolate shall become as the Garden of Eden, &c.* The 37th Chapter is full of the like Promises, as well as the End of the 39th, which concludes with these words, *Neither will I hide my Face any more from them, when I have poured out my Spirit upon the House of Israel.*

Here it would be superfluous to quote all the Passages of the Prophets, that may relate to our Subject. I shall only mention the last Verses of the Prophet *Micah*, as less allegorical than those already cited. *After, saith*

he, the Land has lain desolate, because of its Inhabitants, and the People, the Flock of thine Heritage, shall be fed with thy Rod; the Nations shall see, and be confounded with all their Might, &c. They shall not run to the Lord when dismayed, and shall be afraid of the Lord our God. Who is a God like unto thee, that passes by the Transgressions of the Remnant of thy Heritage? He retaineth not his Anger for ever, because he delighteth in Mercy. Let us here observe the Force of this last Sentence, which is precisely the same with that on which we have laid so much Stress, viz. That he will not keep his Anger for ever; he will, as the Prophet Micah adds, have compassion upon us, subdue our Iniquities, and cast all our Sins into the Depths of the Sea, &c.

Here now is a plain Distinction betwixt the People of GOD, and the Nations of whom it is said, *That they shall be ashamed, and lick the Dust, &c.* However, they are here represented as running to GOD in a great Terror; which signifies, on their part, a Return: and Terror, which is not that of the Damned, which only prompts them to fly; whereas this moves them to run to the Lord.

The Conclusion of the 22d Psalm agrees very well with those last Words; *All the Ends of the Earth shall turn to the Lord, all the Families of the People shall fall down before thee, for the Government belongeth to the Lord,*
and

and he ruleth over the Nations ; All those who go down to the Dust shall bow themselves, and none can keep alive his own Soul. Let us likewise see the 102d Psalm, ver. 15. Then the Heathen shall fear the Name of the Lord, and all the Kings of the Earth his Glory. Ver. 22. When the People are gathered together, and the Kingdoms, to serve the Lord. And who knows but those repeated Apostrophes and Exhortations, Praise the Lord all ye Nations, praise him all ye People, may be so many Prophecies, which inform us what shall at last really happen, as well as several other Passages ; such as Psal. xcvi. 1. Sing unto the Lord, all the Earth ; and Psal. cxlv. 21. Let all Flesh bless his holy Name, for ever and ever. In a word, the last Verse of the Book of Psalms seems to conclude with a Wish to the same purpose, Let every thing that hath Breath praise the Lord.

I don't believe, Sir, you'll require any more Proofs upon this Subject ; you may take these in what Sense you please ; I only beg you'll consider there is nothing in the Sense I have put upon them, but what agrees perfectly well with *unchangeable Truths*, that is, with the Ideas we have of the Nature and Perfections of God ; nor any thing but what is agreeable to the Truths clearly revealed to us, concerning the Design of the Redemption.

I don't know, Sir, whether you'll think I have acquitted myself of the Task you laid

upon me. But, not to send you back to my former Letters, I shall represent them to you in one single Stroke.

The first draws its Arguments from the Nature of GOD, and the unchangeable Ideas we have of his Perfections.

The second proceeds upon the Design of the Incarnation and Death of *Christ*.

The third turns on the Conclusion of the Second Commandment, from whence I draw new Reflections on the Nature of Justice.

The fourth contains a sort of Paraphrase on the 107th *Psalms*, and in particular, considers the Energy of this Declaration, *That God will not always chide.*

This needs no Summary of its Contents. If you have any Objections, Sir, to make, I shall listen to them very willingly.

O B J E C T I O N.

“ It is hard to conceive how a State of
 “ Blasphemy and Despair, such as that of the
 “ Damned is represented, should be proper
 “ to purify and re-establish them in Virtue
 “ and Bliss.”

An

AN ANSWER to the OBJECTION;

O R,

A DISSERTATION concerning the
Nature, Origin, and Duration of Evil.

IT is much more difficult to suppose, that *Evil* will exist eternally, than that it may have an end. Rage and Blasphemy will not purify the Damned; on the contrary, they will be restored by the Destruction of the evil Principle that causes them.

That this evil Principle may be destroyed, is a thing neither impossible nor incomprehensible; since *Evil* has not an *eternal Principle*, it is not the Production of GOD, it is a Disorder accidentally befallen his Works that disfigures them; an Incident contrary to the original Purpose of GOD, that all of them should be good. If GOD has not thought proper to hinder it for a time, will he therefore desist from his first Intention, and suffer the Workmanship in which he designed to draw a Picture of himself, to be for ever disfigured? Will he bestow on this Disorder a hidden Virtue to exist for ever? Shall we, in short, assign the Will of GOD as the Cause of the Eternity, of which it is supposed capable? No Man will venture on the Thought. It must then be found in the Nature of *Evil*, or rather in the Will of Man,

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which

which is the sole Origin of *Evil*; for *Evil* exists not of itself.

This Thesis may be supported by the Experience of what we see in this Life. GOD, it may be said, in this World wills the Destruction of *Evil* in Man, he spares no Means to obtain this End; but Man refuses the Good designed him by God; he refuses to be healed; GOD commits no Force on his Liberty: and there is reason to believe, he will not lay a Restraint on him in the next Life.

To this I answer, That there is really reason to presume, that GOD will never constrain Man's Liberty; but that there is, at the same time, a strong Probability, that the Will of Man will not obstinately persist in *Evil*. If it be asked, Why then does it happen to be so in this Life? I answer, That we must here make a distinction of no small moment.

Man can never *hate Good*, or *love Evil*, considered as such; when in this Life, he obstinately prefers *Evil* to *Good*, this only happens by the Illusion of his Senses, which present him false Goods instead of the real. He is amused with them, if not satisfied. He makes himself deaf, when he pleases, to the Rebukes of Conscience, and has even the Dexterity to lull them asleep for a time, by taking the Shadow of Virtue for its Substance. He never consents to his own Ruin, by the
Deter-

Determination of his Will, but so far as he is either deceived, or imposes on himself.

But in the future Life, the Case will not be the same; Man will not find Objects to amuse him, and stupify himself; he must then listen to the Reproofs of Truth, in their whole Force; and will not have it in his power to deceive himself with Appearances and false Virtues. He will then see *Evil* such as it really is. He will see himself; he will be obliged to abhor himself for what Crimes he has voluntarily committed; and though possibly he may not have such a distinct view, till he has passed through a confused State of Despair, Rage, and Blasphemy, as is pretended, it is highly probable, that this Rage will be turned against Man himself, more than GOD; that he will hate himself, as the only Author of his Misery, and be so far from hating the Deity, and accusing him of Injustice, as it is commonly imagined, that he will do Homage to infinite Goodness and Justice.

Thus when the Wicked are introduced as speaking to the *Hills* and *Mountains*, they seem only to want a hiding-place, and not to accuse Divine Justice; they even give the Name of *Lamb* to their Judge. When we read in the *Revelation* of St. *John*, of Men who blaspheme the Name of GOD, for the Plagues sent upon the Earth, the Apostle speaks only of Men in this World, and consequently still in a State of Stupidity, which

resembles Madness. The Scripture speaks of the State of the Damned, as of a State of *Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth*, which implies nothing against their hating themselves. Could Man but accuse GOD of Injustice, he would be comforted with the Reflection; but nothing will be so mortifying to him, as his being unable to lay the blame upon any but himself.

But may not the Deference he shall at last pay to Divine Justice, be somewhat serviceable to him, as a remote Preparation for his Removal into a less miserable State, and from thence into a better? Is there here any Impossibility, either on GOD's part or Man's? Bare good Sense approves of the Thought, and Scripture would support it by the most express Declarations, should I undertake to quote them.

Here is one Passage, among many others, *The Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the Works of the Devil*. If some Men are damned past all Relief, the Work of the Devil will subsist for ever; but the Design of the Son of GOD was to destroy it: therefore, upon the above Supposition, he would fall short of what he designed.

A second not less express Testimony is, that *Christ hath destroyed Death, and him that had the power of Death, &c.* But if there be Men who are damned to all Eternity, the Empire of Death will not be destroyed, the Sovereignty

reignty of the Devil will be far more extensive than that of JESUS CHRIST; the former would share with the latter the Prerogative of reigning eternally.

It is likewise said, That God will contend with all Flesh, and that he will chide with Man; but then it is added, that he will not do so for ever. It is no hard matter to conceive the manner of his chiding and contending; we all know, that Conscience accompanies Man even to Hell; that it serves as an Evidence to condemn his Conduct, and plead the Cause of GOD. Will any one here say, according to the vulgar Opinion, that it does the Office of an Executioner, and will act as such eternally? Would it be worthy of GOD to employ such an Agent, a Principle of Truth, only to torment Man, without amending or reforming him?

The Words now cited overturn an Opinion so injurious to infinite Goodness, and plainly shew us, that if GOD chides for a time, he has all along an End in view worthy of the Father of Spirits, who not having made Evil, contends with his Creatures, only in order to destroy it. Those words of the Prophet *Isaiab*, chap. lvii. ver. 16. deserve to be quoted at full length; *I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the Spirit should fail before me, and the Souls which I have made.*

60 O B J E C T I O N.

Such is the Purpose of GOD, and he has been pleased to declare it to us *; though he had not made any such Declaration, we ought to have presumed it; common Sense would teach us, that *Good* having a *Divine Principle*, ought to be stronger than *Evil*, which is essentially nothing but Disorder and Depravation; that *Evil* putting Man into a State of Violence, that State cannot continue for ever; that this State of Violence supposes its contrary in Man struggling against it, and which coming originally from GOD, cannot fail, sooner or later, to gain the Victory over *Evil*, which is the Work of Man; that GOD being the God of Order, and the undoubted Sovereign of the Universe, can never consent that Disorder and Confusion should prevail there for ever.

O B J E C T I O N.

“ The Author has not perhaps observed
 “ the Tendency of the Principles he lays
 “ down. Those Principles will infer no less
 “ than the Restoration of the *Devils*, who
 “ are likewise originally the Creatures of God,
 “ Beings whom God at first saw to be very
 “ good, as well as his other Works. If it is
 “ true, that all things must at last be reduced
 “ to

* A Truth, dictated by common Sense itself, and confirmed by a positive Revelation from God, gains hereby a degree of Certainty nothing short of Demonstration.

ANSWER to an OBJECTION. 61

“ to Order, if the Eternity that shall succeed
“ Time must be essentially agreeable to the
“ Eternity that preceded it, then the Devils
“ are to be restored to Bliss; since there was
“ no wretched Creature in the former, it follows that there shall be none in the latter.”

The ANSWER.

This Objection is so well inforced, that it alone is sufficient to establish what it seems designed to overturn. Of these two things, one must be allowed; either the Devils are in the same case with Men, or they are not: if they are not, what has been proved concerning the Restoration of Man, does not affect them; if they are essentially in the same Condition, then whatever proves the Recovery of Men, at the same time proves that of the fallen Angels.

Perhaps several Persons will think this Conclusion of so dangerous a nature, that to avoid the Inconveniences thereof, they'd chuse to abandon the System of the Re-establishment of Mankind. It would certainly be very dismal to be obliged to live with such Beings for a whole Eternity, the bare meeting with them would be frightful, supposing them as black as they are represented, with Horns and cloven Feet; rather than run that hazard, it were much better to knock the whole System on the head.

“ But

62 ANSWER to an OBJECTION.

“ But to be serious, some may say, All
 “ Men are not capable of those panick Fears;
 “ and I am of opinion, I should not be in the
 “ least afraid of the Devils in Paradise; I
 “ could wish to see them there, and to per-
 “ suade myself, at present, that the thing is
 “ possible; but cannot conceive how it should
 “ be so. How can Spirits busied in doing
 “ all manner of Harm to Man, as far as in
 “ them lies, be in a way to Restoration?”

Whoever you are that makes this Objection, pray answer me one Question in my turn. Do you perfectly know the Nature of those Spirits to whom we give the Name of *Devils*; and are you thoroughly acquainted with the Nature of the *Evil* they strive to inflict on Men? Now, if you do not well know either of these things, as I have reason to think you do not, can you conceive *how* and after what manner they shall be restored? Can you, on this foot, determine the Impossibility thereof, because you cannot possibly, in your present Situation, comprehend it?

For my part, who frankly acknowledge my Ignorance in this matter, I have not attempted to prove positively, that the fallen Angels shall be restored; but if the Principles I have laid down for the Restoration of Man, will, by just consequence, include theirs, so let it be; I do not retract it. I am one of those who would not be affrighted at finding Devils in Heaven; or, to speak seriously, I

am

L E T T E R V. 63

am one of those who could not think themselves perfectly happy, did they know any Beings must be eternally miserable.

But as to this, let every one judge as he sees reason ; I only intreat the Reader to observe, that Certainty can never be shaken by Uncertainty ; that self-evident Principles can never be injured by a Consequence of this sort, since the Effect of it is undoubtedly more to be desired than dreaded.

L E T T E R VI.

Wherein the Objection, That this Opinion may lead Men to Remissness and Security, is answered.

S I R,

IN answer to the Difficulty you proposed in your last, I can assure you I foresaw it while I was writing my preceding Letters : *To what purpose is it, said I, to set in too clear a light Truths that may possibly encourage Licentiousness and Remissness ?* Would it not be better to leave Mankind in an Error, that may be a Means to awaken their Attention, and lead them to Virtue ? This Difficulty was succeeded by several Reflections, of which I shall now give you the Substance.

First then, I own that the Knowledge of this Truth is not absolutely necessary, and that we are not obliged to make it publick. We may rest satisfied with speaking of *Hell* in

in the Terms of Scripture, and leave every one to explain them in the Sense he likes best. However, on a right view of things, we do not find, that the Opinion of the Christian World about the Eternity of Hell-Torments, produces any very remarkable effect, or proves a sufficient Curb to prevent their going on in wicked Courses. The fear of a violent Distemper of twenty or thirty Years continuance, would make a deeper Impression upon them.

What can be the Reason of this amazing Indifference about an Evil of so desperate a nature, which they profess to believe, and yet do nothing toward avoiding it? Among many other Causes, one of the principal is, that their Belief is not built on a right Knowledge of God and his Perfections; they only know that the Scripture speaks of an everlasting Fire, into which Divine Justice will precipitate the Wicked, there to suffer eternally. It is true, they imagine they believe it; but see how they make themselves easy! Every one is persuaded, that he himself is not of the number of the wicked, whose Portion shall be in the Lake of Fire and Brimstone. In short, if they are not professed Highway-men, Traytors, Blasphemers, &c. they cannot conceive that God will condemn them, to frightful and endless Torments. They are sensible indeed, that they are guilty of several Faults; but where is the Man without Sin? Besides,
for

for these they ask Forgiveness daily : And what are the Merits of *Christ* good for, if they do not deliver Men from everlasting Misery?

Not only these Persons flatter themselves with Impunity, but even Sinners of the first magnitude, Traytors, and the Prejured, &c. all of them to a Man hope to escape Hell, either by repenting, as they propose to do, sooner or later; or through the infinite Mercy of GOD, that will get the better of Justice, as they speak. In reality, GOD can as easily pardon the greatest as the least Sinners, since it costs him nothing. By a single Act of his Will, he can either make a Creature happy for ever, or let him perish eternally : sure then he will not chuse the last; because this would suppose Cruelty and Revenge in an infinitely merciful and compassionate Being. Thus the more terrible Hell becomes, by supposing it eternal, every one more easily persuades himself, that Divine Mercy will exempt him from it.

At this rate, we ought to speak quite contrary to the Scriptures, and say, That *broad and wide is the Way that leadeth to Heaven, and many there be that walk in it*; whereas, the *Gate of Hell is straight and narrow, and few there be that enter in at it*. But why do I say few, when there is scarce one so wicked as to deserve it?

Hence it is evident, that the great number of Christians, who profess the Belief of the
Eternity

Eternity of Hell-Torments, are so far from using it as a Motive to Holiness, that it is only made a Handle to Sloth and Security. This may seem to be a Paradox ; but it is no hard matter to explain it.

I have already touched on it, and shall now repeat what I have said. The greater Disproportion the Punishment Men are threatened with seems to have, either with their Crimes*, or the Ideas they form to themselves of the Mercy of GOD, the more confidently they persuade themselves that eternal Fire will not be their Lot. But if, instead of determining the Duration of the Torments which Sinners must undergo, we should rest satisfied with telling them, *Rom. ch. ii. That there shall be Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of Man that doth evil*; and that in so exact a Proportion, *Prov. ch. i. That every one shall bear the Punishment of his Iniquity, and shall eat the Fruit of his Works*: It would then be impossible for the Conscience of the most profligate not to acquiesce in this Judgment ; nor could any one flatter himself with Impunity, under any Pretext whatever. This unchangeable Truth, *That God shall render to every Man according to his Works*, so often repeated in Scripture, is written in indelible Characters

* The Idea of Proportion is inseparable from that of Equity ; no Proportion can be found betwixt a disorderly Life of a few Years continuance, and eternal Torments ; nor is less Disproportion found betwixt such Punishment, and boundless Mercy.

Characters on the Consciences of all Men; every one may know by his own experience, how much more certain he is of the Truth of this Proposition, than of some hopes of impunity, he may with difficulty endeavour to afford himself; the latter being a laborious Fabrick of his own raising; but the former he feels within himself, without contributing in the least towards it, nay even in spite of himself.

Don't you now think, Sir, when your Objection is a little more narrowly examined into, that it loses a great deal of its Strength, and is not far from dwindling into nothing? All that can be done in favour of Antiquity and Orthodoxy, would be to grant that there may be a sort of equality* between the Advantage or Disadvantage Men may reap from those different Opinions. Some will be roused by the dread of eternal Torments, whilst others will be excited by the profound and indelible

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* If the Author had not told us he had made a Stretch in favour of Orthodoxy, we should have thought that he yielded too much to it; but this piece of Respect is to be excused. However, 'tis evident he could not support it long; for if we consider things rightly, we shall find, that the most frightful Ideas don't produce the greatest effects upon Men, but those that bear their own Evidence along with them, and to which common Sense is obliged to assent. Every Opinion proceeding from a false Principle destroys itself, and, which is even worse, produces a Conclusion quite contrary to what was intended. And thus the Opinion of the Eternity of Hell-Torments, is of much more use to lull Men asleep, than to awake them to their Duty.

Persuasion engraved on their Consciences, as well as inculcated in the Gospel, That *every one shall bear the Punishment of his Iniquity, and carry his own Burthen.* In a word, That *every one shall receive in his Body, according to what he hath done, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil.*

Let us suppose, if you please, that as many will be awaked to a right Sense of things, by the first Opinion, as by the last; yet I very much doubt whether the former leads as effectually to a real Conversion as the latter: because Persons in the first Case being only actuated by servile Fear, may easily rest satisfied, if they have forsaken scandalous Sins, and heinous Crimes, that put them in fear of Hell; when once they come to lead a good Life, according to the World, they fancy themselves intirely screened from eternal Damnation, so that they need not give themselves the trouble to go any farther; they are content with the lowest place in Paradise; and provided they do but escape Hell, they aspire at nothing more.

But those who are actuated by the strong Impression of this Truth, *God shall render to every Man according to his Works,* are set to work after another manner. They know that GOD cannot be mocked, and that whatever a Man *sows* that shall he *reap*; that as they have more or less employed *their Members* to *serve as Instruments of Righteousness or Iniquity,*

quity, they shall more or less reap the Fruits of the one or other.

It must be acknowledged, that those who ever so little understand the Rules of this unchangeable Justice, have much stronger Motives for advancing in Holiness, than those who know nothing but the threatning of eternal Punishment. Here I except such as are animated by a filial Love, and with whom Fear is but an accessory Motive. I only compare one Fear with another, and say, that as long as a Man stands in need of Fear, to induce him to Obedience, and has no other Object but eternal Fire before his eyes, it may indeed make him advance some Steps whilst it continues; but it seldom happens that he doth not return to his old Courses, as soon as the Emotion is over. Whereas the other kind of Fear hath this superior advantage, that its Impressions, tho' less sensible, are deeper, and much more durable, and such as one cannot get so easily rid of, as he can of the former.

A Man who, in order to excite himself to Virtue, says to himself, that an everlasting Fire is prepared for the Impenitent, is soon freed from this dread, by persuading himself, that he either is not one of those who deserve that Name, or that he can easily convert himself. But he who knows the Rights of Justice, cannot quiet himself thus; though he is not afraid of eternal Condemnation, he is certain, that *God will not hold the Guilty innocent.* That
 he

70 *The Answer to the Sixth* LETTER.

he who searches the Heart, will judge every Man according to his Courses, and the Fruits of his Doings. In short, he knows very well, to use the Prophet *Jeremiab's* Words, ch. ii. that *his own Wickedness shall correct him, and make him feel inexpressible Anguish.*

I believe, Sir, I have said more than what was necessary for answering your Objection, and that you'll own, that though it may not be absolutely necessary to inform Men upon this head, at least it is not proper to lull them to sleep. I'm inclined to think, that some serious Reflections upon the Contents of this Letter, may determine you to be of opinion, that it would be of service to a good many People, to know these Truths to the bottom.

The Answer to the Sixth LETTER.

S I R,

I Am perfectly well satisfied with your Answer to the Difficulty I proposed in my last, and now see that we suffer ourselves to be surprized by specious Appearances, without considering a Subject on all sides. Your Observations have opened my Eyes, and made me see that what I formerly thought proper for confirming Men in Security, is on the contrary very capable of rousing them effectually: But, still there remains one Difficulty behind, which I intreat you to resolve. Upon the Supposition

The Answer to the Sixth LETTER 71

position that Hell-Torments shall one day come to an end, this Hell will be no more than a State of Purification, or a sort of *Purgatory*, that borders very close upon what the Church of *Rome* supposes; an Opinion, which our Orthodox Divines have always look'd on as a groundless Fancy, and confuted by strong Arguments, with which you are not unacquainted; and, among others, by these Words: *The Blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanseth us from all Sin; there is no Condemnation to them that are in CHRIST JESUS; those who die in the Lord, rest from their Labours;* and a great many more to the same purpose. Pray, Sir, answer this Difficulty, and you will oblige him who is, &c.

P A R T II.

LETTER VII.

Wherein the different Sentiments of Protestant and Romish Divines, concerning the State of Souls after Death, are explained.

S I R,

YOUR second Difficulty will furnish me with an Occasion of examining a Question, which might of itself very well make a separate Article: It is true, as you conclude, That if Hell is one day to have an end, what
we

we call by that Name, will be but a State of Purification; whether it endures for a longer or shorter time, and how intense soever its Torments may be. But, this State has no manner of relation to the Purgatory of *Roman Catholics*, who make it a middle State between Heaven and Hell, and think they have as good Reasons to support this their Opinions, as our Divines believe they have to run it down as quite groundless.

I'll assure you, Sir, now we are upon this Topic, that a great many judicious Men, who do not believe the *Restoration*, I here plead for, think they have good reasons for espousing the Opinion of a *middle State*; widely different indeed from the common notion of *Purgatory*, though in some respects not unlike it. I believe, Sir, you will not be displeased with my making a short Enquiry into that Question; and without regarding what I have advanced in former Letters, I shall now speak, as if I supposed the Eternity of Hell-Torments. I shall begin with the different Sentiments of Divines upon this Subject.

The Protestants only distinguish two contrary States in the Life to come; eternal Happiness and eternal Misery, which they call Hell; this they represent as a State of Blasphemy, Hatred of GOD, Rage and Despair. This, according to them, is the Portion of all those who are not really converted; or, to use their

their own Terms, who have not sincerely repented.

On the other hand, they are agreed that those in whom this Repentance is found, though in the very lowest degree, are admitted immediately after Death into perfect Happiness, in consideration of the Merits of Christ, notwithstanding their Sanctification is hardly begun. They acknowledge, however, that no unclean thing can see the face of GOD; but it is probable, they suppose that such Souls are as it were metamorphosed into Holiness at the moment of their Death: but whether this sudden change is to be made in the Body or out of the Body, is what they don't pretend to determine.

Whatever becomes of the Question, this is the Opinion of Orthodox Divines concerning Souls after Death. The *Romish* Doctors distinguish three different States in the Life to come. According to them, the Saints of the first Rank, who have been purified in this Life by all kinds of Tribulation, and the exercise of the sublimest Virtues, are immediately admitted into eternal Bliss.

The Unregenerate and Impenitent, who have not the least sincere Degree of Love to GOD, are plunged into Hell for all Eternity; but initiated Christians, nay Christians, whose Conversion is sincere, but whose Souls are not yet cleansed from all manner of Filthiness, must undergo a painful State of Purification,

more or less so, according to their different Degrees of Corruption.

Hell being represented in Scripture under the Emblem of Fire, they conceive this middle State, called *Purgatory*, as a devouring Fire, in nothing different from that of Hell, but as it is of use to purify Souls; whereas the other, say they, is an avenging Fire that constantly devours without consuming *Evil*, and never purifies those who are tormented by it.

To these Circumstances they add some other accidental things, to which the Vulgar give more attention, than to the Essentials themselves; they say *Purgatory* is situated under the Earth; that its Fire is material; that it is seven times hotter than ours: that they can deliver Souls from thence, by procuring a certain number of Masses, doing of Alms, performing Pilgrimages, Vows, &c. to their Intention.

It must be acknowledged that this Idea of *Purgatory*, has been so loaded with fabulous Stories, that the very Name of it is become odious; and the bare Pronunciation of the Word is sufficient for making a Man suspected of Heresy, among all such Protestants as value themselves on being Orthodox. It must be owned, that the Catholick Divines have given too much room for this Horror, by the Abuses they have suffered to creep in on this head. But it were to be wished, that our Divines had separated Truth from Falshood,

L E T T E R V I I I. 75

hood, and when they rejected the Abuses and groundless Conclusions deduced from this Principle, they had at the same time retained what is true and simple.

Sir, If you ask me which side I would chuse, I must tell you, that I would not absolutely embrace either, but pick out of each what seems to me founded on Truth. The Examination of this is of importance; I may, perhaps, attempt it in another Letter.

L E T T E R V I I I.

Wherein is considered how we may be informed concerning the State of Souls separated from their Bodies, and what the Scriptures teach us on this head.

S I R,

I Undertook in my last, to enquire what is solid in the different Opinions I then proposed; but as we can distinguish the *False*, only by comparing it with the *True*, I shall begin with an Enquiry into Truth in itself.

First, I shall examine by what means we may be instructed concerning the State of Souls after Death; and then consider what the Scripture has revealed to us on that point.

There are but two ways whereby we can get Information, concerning the State of Souls departed; either by the Sentiment of Conscience, and the Ideas of Justice, which

GOD has stamped upon each of us; or by the Revelation which GOD has made in the Holy Scriptures concerning it.

Conscience sufficiently convinces every one, that the Soul subsists after the dissolution of the Body, and that it is just that it should then reap the Fruits of the Good or Evil it has sown in this Life. The Scriptures every where confirm this inward Testimony, and give it a new Degree of Certainty; for GOD alone perfectly knows what passes in the World of Spirits.

These two Methods of Instruction reciprocally illustrate each other: without Revelation the Testimony of Conscience would be too loose and confused; and without the inward Testimony, we could not well discern the true Sense of the figurative Expressions used in Scripture about this matter. It is therefore only by comparing these two kinds of Testimony, that we can possibly know any thing concerning the State of Souls after this Life. Let us now see what the Scriptures teach us on this Article.

In the whole Old Testament, we find no positive Revelation concerning it; we only see there, some marks of the Hope of the Saints, who were enlightned by a Prophetical Spirit; such were *Job* and *David*; the first of whom testified it by these Words, *I know that my Redeemer liveth*, &c. and the second, by some Sentences diffused through several of his *Psalms*,

Psalms, which yet are far less positive than those of *Job*.

In the New Testament, we find many formal Declarations concerning the Certainty of the Universal Judgment and Resurrection; Revelation is not in the least ambiguous in these two Points. The Case is not the same in regard to the State of Souls 'till the Resurrection; so that we can judge of it only by Conjectures, or rather by Consequences drawn from some certain Principles.

Let us first see what the Scriptures teach us most literally concerning it. The Parable of the wicked rich Man, informs us, that *Lazarus* was carried by the Angels into *Abraham's Bosom*, and the wicked rich Man was in Hell. *St. John* says, in the *Apocalypse*, that *those who die in the Lord rest from their Labours*; and *St. Paul* tells us, *That if the earthly House of our Tabernacle is dissolved, we have an House eternal in the Heavens*. He assures us, that the Faithful chuse to be absent from the Body, to be present with the Lord; and as to himself, that he desires to be divested of his earthly Tabernacle, to be with CHRIST. Here now, if I don't mistake it, is all that the Scriptures teach us most positively concerning the State of Souls separated from their Bodies; but after all, every one sees they are only general Expressions, that don't give us any distinct Notion of what passes immediately after Death; besides, they are Saints
D 3
who

who here exprefs their Sentiments, which proves nothing as to the reft of Mankind.

Every body knows, that Parables are not to be ftretched beyond their principal De-
fign, nor to be ftremely taken in all their Cir-
cumftances : that therefore of the wicked
Mifer, I juft now mentioned, tends plainly to
inform us, that all things in the Life to come
fhall be equally compensated ; that thofe who
are here below in Debasement and Sufferings,
and make a right Improvement of their Af-
flictions, fhall in their turn be fet at reft, and
exalted : whereas, on the contrary, thofe who
have had their good things in this World, and
wallow'd in Pleafures upon Earth, without
any concern but that of prefent Enjoyments,
fhall be tormented in the next. And this is
the Explication the Parable gives of its felf,
in the Answer of *Abraham* to the wealthy
Mifer.

Here I expect to have my Opinion of a
middle State opposed by our Saviour's Pro-
mise to the penitent Thief, which, by the
by, is mere trifling ; for what Connection is
there betwixt his Circumftances and thofe of
all Mankind ? And who knows but his Puri-
fication might have been finifhed, as well by
his repenting long before his Execution, as by
a voluntary Acceptation of his Punifhment ?

In reality, this Instance is fo foreign to the
Purpose, that it might as well be proved that
all Men fhall be raifed twice, becaufe the
Saints

ANSWER to LETTERS VII, VIII. 79

Saints who arose at our Saviour's Death, must be raised a second time at the final Resurrection.

I conclude therefore, from all that has been said, that since the Scripture only expresses itself parabolically, concerning the State of Souls separated from the Body, and not dogmatically, or by way of positive Declaration, we are not obliged to an implicit Belief in the Decisions of Divines: every one may examine for himself, whether the Scriptures contain some sure and undoubted Principle, from which he may draw Consequences for giving light to the Question: this deserves a more exact Disquisition; if you please, we will reserve it for another Letter.

The Answer to the Seventh and Eighth
L E T T E R S.

S I R,

THE shortness of your two last Letters increases my Impatience to see the Sequel of them. I must own, I was not a little surprized upon reading of your last: for I have all my Life-time believed that the Scriptures taught as a positive Article, that Souls, as soon as they quit their Bodies, immediately appear in the Presence of GOD, there to undergo a particular Judgment; after which, the Souls of the Just are admitted into Bliss, and those of the Wicked plunged into Hell.

But your Letter assures me, that the Scriptures don't explain themselves upon this head. I indeed at first looked upon your Assertion to be false, and have been at some pains in searching the Scriptures for some explicit Testimonies on my side ; but all to no purpose.

In short, being resolved to know the source of those Notions, which I had as firmly believed, as I now do the Existence of a GOD; I found I had learn'd them first in my Catechism, when a Child, and had been confirmed in them by reading some Controversial Writings, which all unanimously maintain the same Opinion, as an unquestionable Truth. So venerable was their common Suffrage with me, that I can assure you, I dar'd never venture to take the liberty of doubting of it.

I am now convinced of the force of the Prejudices of Childhood ; and shall be more upon my guard for the future, against whatever may be derived from that Principle.

L E T T E R IX.

*Wherein certain Principles are examin'd;
and from which Conclusions follow, that
may illustrate the Question.*

S I R,

IN order to come to the Examination I hinted to you in my last, I shall begin with some general Reflections, on the Nature
of

of *Fundamental Principles*; as being the *Basis* of particular Truths.

And here, I beg you wou'd consider, that the *Principles* of things include in them all the *Consequences*; when a Principle is once well established, all the *Conclusions* flowing from it are so too.

The Sacred Authors have written with freedom, and without confining themselves to the Rules of Art; sometimes they draw *Inferences* from their own Principles; at others they lay down Principles, and leave it to the Reader's Industry, to deduce *Conclusions* from them.

Some Principles are more certain and indisputable than others; the formal and positive *Decisions* of Scripture, may be look'd upon as so many Principles; but such *Decisions* are not equally incontestable: Why so? Because we may be ignorant of their true Meaning.

Here I resume the distinction I made in my first Letter, betwixt *Eternal Unalterable Truths*, that are built upon the Nature of GOD and his Perfections, and *accessory or particular Truths*, which we know only by Scripture-Testimony.

I say, that Principles supported by the first of these Truths, are the most indisputable; is it because things revealed by GOD are not equally certain? Not so, they are equally cer-

tain with respect to him ; but we may be mistaken in the Sense we give them.

The unchangeable Truths, are these in which we are in no danger of being deceived, as being always the same, after what manner soever the Scripture may express them ; their Reality depends not on the Letter, which may admit of different Interpretations ; even though the Letter itself was lost, they would not be less certain. We may say, *They are not become True by Revelation ; but were revealed to us because they are True.*

It is now time to examine those Truths, so far as they may be of service to our Subject.

And first, I begin with GOD's design in forming Creatures after his own Image. He intended they should be *Holy and Happy*, by sharing of his Sanctity and Felicity ; as soon as they fell from that blessed State, he omitted nothing that might restore them ; this is the only End of all his Conduct towards Man from *Adam* to this day ; the Law and the Gospel are only various means for bringing Men to Holiness ; if GOD blesses us with all spiritual Blessings, it is, *that we may be Holy and Unblameable before him in Charity.*

This is an undoubted Principle, nor can it be shaken by alledging that GOD could have no other End in view than his own Glory ; that he created us for his Glory, and sanctifies us for the same purpose. I allow all this ; but was this done to acquire a Degree of
Glory

Glory he had not before, or to add any thing to his own? The Thought would be absurd, because nothing can be added to what is Infinite. All that can be said is, that GOD's Glory is displayed when he does good to his Creatures, and particularly when he forms them after the Image of his own Holiness. But, the manifestation of this Glory redounds to our Benefit, not to his.

It will therefore be eternally true, that all the Ways of GOD towards Men, tend only to their Sanctification.

But secondly, why does GOD do so much for the Sanctification of Men? Pure Charity is his only Motive, because they cannot be united to him without being holy, and without this Union, it is impossible they should be happy; *Holiness* and *Happiness* being inseparable. Here now is another Principle, that deserves our Consideration; I shall explain myself.

Holiness is not an arbitrary Condition that GOD has imposed on Men, in order to give them the Enjoyment of heavenly Bliss, as if he might indifferently have laid upon them any other. It is an essential Condition necessary to Happiness; as a right Disposition of all the Members is requisite to the Health of the Body. It was therefore well said, *That the Health of the Soul is nothing but Holiness.* Upon this Principle the *English* Divines have

maintained, that even a Mansion in Paradise could not make an un sanctified Soul happy.

From this Principle a third follows; that the Promises and Menaces made by GOD to Men, are not, properly speaking, a formed Design of rewarding, or punishing them according as they shall, or shall not comply with the Conditions required. No; it is a bare Declaration of what will happen to every one, by the very nature of things, according to the choice he shall make; as if a Husbandman when sowing his Field was told, that as he sowed good or bad Grain, he shall reap either the one or the other. On this Principle, *St. Paul, Galat. ch. 5.* makes that remarkable Declaration; *Be not deceived, (says he) GOD is not mocked; for what a Man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

From this Principle, we may draw an Inference, on which I touched in my first Letters; that, properly speaking, GOD does not inflict Sufferings on Men, but leaves them to reap the Fruits of what they have sown. GOD never avenges himself; he is neither wrathful nor furious, as commonly represented; being pure Goodness and the Source of all Happiness, he can give only what he himself possesseth; and although the Scriptures make use of ambiguous Expressions, that seem to suppose he avengeth himself, is provoked, and inflicts severe Punishments on his Creatures; in these and the like Cases, we are

to make use of the unalterable Ideas, we have of his Nature and Perfections, and give them the preference to the Letter.

These Principles being laid down, which no Man of Sense will dispute, I shall, with their assistance, examine the different Opinions of Divines, beginning with those of the Church of *Rome*.

The distinction they make of a middle State, between Eternal Happiness and Eternal Damnation, is not entirely groundless; it is supported by our second Principle, *viz. That without perfect Holiness a Soul cannot be re-united to GOD*, and consequently be *completely happy*. Now, as but very few arrive to Purity of Heart in this Life, they suppose that those whose Sanctification is begun, but interrupted by Death, will not for that reason be excluded from Happiness, but that the Enjoyment of it shall be deferr'd, till they are cleansed from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit. This is what seems most probable in the Doctrine of the *Roman Catholics* upon this head; but it must be owned, there are very few, if any of that Communion, whose Ideas are so refined on this Article; they look upon this middle State, called *Purgatory*, as a Payment made by Men to divine Justice, by a certain Measure of Sufferings undergone, 'till it is satisfied. This, is the commonly received Notion of Purgatory among them;
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the Vulgar add abundance of other Absurdities, too well known to be here repeated.

Let us now come to the Protestant Divines. It is not without some reason that they reject these Suppositions: In Reality, this is to suppose that the Justice of GOD exacts of Men satisfaction to its demands by their Sufferings; that it is susceptible of Wrath, and can be appeased only by Torments; that actual Sins, which they pretend are expiated hereby, are all the Evil with which the Soul is infected. This is confounding the Acts of Corruption, with Corruption itself.

The Protestant Divines therefore have reason to reject the Idea of such a *Purgatory*, but they have not so much reason on their side, when they positively determine; *That there is no Medium between Eternal Happiness and Eternal Damnation.* This deserves some farther Reflection.

To distinguish in the Life to come, only two Classes at an infinite distance from each other, such as those of Heaven and Hell, is to suppose that all be ranked only in two Classes, in regard to their Dispositions; that they are all, without exception, either in the highest pitch of *Holiness*, or the greatest height of *Depravity*: (for it is an invariable Rule of Justice, that every one should be happy or miserable, according to his good or bad Dispositions, and this in an exact Proportion.) But this Supposition is so visibly false, that it
does

does not deserve to be confuted. Every reasonable Person will own, that from the most *Wicked* to the most *Holy*, there are infinite Degrees. May it not be said, that there are, perhaps, as many different Degrees as there are different Creatures?

Hence it follows, that between the two Extremes, there will be an infinite Number who will be found more or less Good, and more or less Wicked, with such diversity as is beyond description. In some, *Good* will prevail over *Evil*; in others, *Evil* over *Good*; in several, *Good* and *Evil* will be confounded, or as it were equally ballanced; and the different advantageous or disadvantageous Circumstances, each Person shall be in, will infinitely diversify the Degree of *Good* or *Evil*.

I now return to our second Principle, and say, that if it is true, *That the measure of Holiness constitutes the measure of Bliss*; the Persons therefore, of whom I have just now been speaking, being neither perfectly Holy, nor compleatly Wicked, will, for this very reason, neither be absolutely happy, nor desperately miserable.

Upon this Principle, those in whom *Good* shall prevail over *Evil*, will be more happy than miserable; and those in whom *Evil* shall have the ascendant, will have a larger share of Misery than Happiness; and those, in whom *Good* and *Evil* are equally poised, must sustain

sustain terrible Combats, 'till *Good* has got the better of its Adversary.

Upon this foot, the three Classes just now mentioned, although different from one another, will however constitute a Medium between the greatest Happiness and most exquisite Misery; which is all that is intended by the *middle State* now under consideration.

The Consequence is so natural, and so evidently results from the very Principles of the Orthodox, that I am at a loss how they can elude the force of it; for by their own Confession, no Man can see the Lord without Sanctification; and, as is further acknowledged, there is scarce a Person to be found, whose Sanctification is finished in this Life, it follows, that it must be completed in the Life to come.

But here, perhaps, they may think to retort the Argument, by supposing Sanctification being begun, though in the lowest degree, is finished in an Instant by a kind of Metamorphosis, when the Soul is separated from the Body.

I'd fain ask these Gentlemen, how they came by this Idea; whether they take it from some *Decisions* of *Scripture*, from the Sentiments of Conscience, or from their own Experience.

It would be superfluous to prove that Experience cannot be admitted in the present Case. I acknowledge, I should be surprized

to

to see a decision of this sort in Scripture. As to Conscience, it is so far from having the least Inclination to espouse this Opinion, that it constantly declares against it; and in spite of the violent Propensity every Man has to what flatters him, in spite of all the Authorities alledged to persuade him of its Reality, Conscience tacitly gives the lye to those deceitful Assurances, especially when any imminent danger threatens approaching Death.

Let us therefore agree, that this Opinion of a Metamorphosis or sudden Transformation, is harder to be proved than supposed.

But, says some Divine of a different Opinion, " I do not suppose this pretended Change, and maintain it is not necessary; because GOD does not look upon an imperfect Soul in its self, but in his own well-beloved Son; he covers all its Spots with the Robe of his Righteousness. And though it is very far from being holy, he regards it as such by the Imputation of Christ's Merits."

This I must own is a very short way. But the Question is, whether this System be founded on the *True*, or not; the Scripture-Phrases that seem to support it, are too ambiguous to be allowed as Proofs; they prove too much, and therefore prove nothing.

If they prove that the Merits of JESUS CHRIST, and the Imputation of his Justice excuse Men from sanctifying themselves, because

cause GOD considers them not in themselves, they prove too much. On that foot, our first Principle wou'd be false, *That all the ways of GOD toward Men tend only to sanctify them.* If it be allowed that they prove nothing like this, the necessity of Sanctification remains untouched, and consequently nothing is proved.

Let us go one step farther: Were it possible for a Soul, full of bad Inclinations, to be saved, without any real Change wrought in it, it would be saved without being holy; it would indeed be reputed holy by Imputation, but would not be really so. What would follow from this? Two manifest Absurdities.

First, That we might be numbred among the *Blessed*, though we were never in the list of Saints; and then our second Principle would be false, *viz. That Holiness and Happiness are inseparable.*

Secondly, That Paradise, which ought to be the Mansion of Truth and Reality, would be only the abode of Appearance and Illusion; GOD would no longer judge of things as they really are; he would not repute a Man *just*, who is really *unjust*; and *Spiritual*, who is really *Carnal*; and the Contradiction would be solved by this ingenious mental Reservation, "That JESUS CHRIST the Righteous imputes unto them his Righteousness, and that GOD does not look upon them as they are in themselves."

Does

ANSWER to LETTER IX. 91

Does GOD deal in bare Words and Subterfuges? and is it not more true to say, that he doth not hold the Guilty innocent?

But I have already said more than was necessary for confuting an Opinion so ill grounded. I should think I called your Judgment in question, should I say any more upon the Subject; allow me to leave the rest to your own Reflection.

An Answer to the Ninth LETTER.

S I R,

YOUR last has opened my Eyes to Truths I had never before considered; I had till now thought, that in order to maintain the Opinion of a middle State, we ought to have recourse to groundless Hypotheses; but I now find that, on the contrary, those who deny it, are reduced to Suppositions without Proof. Such are that of a sudden change at the hour of Death, and that of an Imputation of Righteousness, which dispenses with actual Sanctification. The last mentioned, is not only void of Proof, but the bare mention of it is sufficient for shewing its falshood. It is surprizing that we grow old in our Attachment to Opinions never thoroughly examined, and the Consequences of which are not so much as perceived.

I now comprehend, that whatever Method we take, it is very difficult to elude the Opinion

nion of Purification; whether we suppose the Eternity of Hell-Torments, or that they are to have an end: if the latter, this Hell will itself be only a State of Purification for Souls; if, on the other hand, we stick to the Opinion of the Orthodox concerning the endless duration of Hell-Torments, there is still greater reason to espouse a middle State; for without that, they must suppose the eternal Destruction of an infinite number of Creatures, who have not been able to complete their Sanctification in this Life, though they had entered on it.

I shall not therefore, Sir, ask any more Proofs of the Opinion delivered in your former Letters; the Principles you have laid down, have prevented all the Objections I might have made. I perceive, that if I advance the grand Argument of the Orthodox against you, *viz. That the Blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanseth us from all Sin*: You have answered it, by your first and second Principles.

The first is, *That all the ways of GOD towards Men, tend only to make them holy*; therefore the Blood of our Saviour was not shed to dispense with Sanctification; but to lead us to it.

The second, *That Holiness and Happiness are inseparable*; if so, it follows, that the Blood of JESUS CHRIST ought to cleanse us really, and not by a bare Imputation, since
without

L E T T E R X.

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without real Holiness we can never be really happy.

Thus, Sir, I apply your Principles to the Objections that may be offered against your Doctrine; I don't know whether I enter rightly into your way of thinking.

Permit me to propose two other Difficulties. *First*, If Hell is only a State of Purification, then, properly speaking, there will be no Hell at all.

Secondly, Upon your Hypothesis, the Souls of the Wicked would be placed with those of the Just; and what Fellowship hath Unrighteousness with Righteousness? Can it be imagined that the sincerely Pious, though not absolutely holy, will be ranked with the vilest Sinners, hardened in all manner of Vice?

Pray, Sir, be so good as to clear up these Difficulties, &c.

L E T T E R X.

A more accurate Enquiry, in what Sense it is true, That the Blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanseth us from all Sin.

S I R,

I Think you make a very just Application of the Principles we have laid down, to the Objections usually made to the Doctrine of Purification. The Passage of St. *John*, which you say may be urged against this Opinion, would

would be more proper for establishing it, whether it be considered in itself, or as it stands connected with the preceding and following Words : *The Blood of CHRIST cleanseth us from all Sin.* When we say *cleanseth*, we do not barely say *absolves*, *discharges* from Punishment, much less *dispenses* with Purification from Sin. This would be an evident Contradiction, and would make St. *John* assert that the Blood of Christ cleanseth us, without cleansing us; just as if we should say of an able Physician, that he cures all kinds of Diseases by a Certificate of Health, though he cured none. Should we be satisfied to be cured after this manner?

Let us now determine what is meant by *the Blood of JESUS CHRIST*; it cannot be understood of his material Blood; it is, they will say, the Merit of his Blood or Death. Agreed: but what has he merited for us by it? Is it an Exemption from Sanctity, or the Spirit of Sanctification? If the latter, its Operations must really produce Holiness in our Souls; but cleansing and sanctifying are one and the same thing.

Might we not, to avoid all ambiguity, understand the Words thus; *The Spirit, which JESUS CHRIST has merited for us by his Blood, purifieth us from all Sin*; that this is the true meaning of them, will be the more evident, if we consider the preceding Verse,
and

and the general Design of the whole Chapter, 1 *Epist. St. John* i.

The Apostle here lays down a Principle, from which he himself draws the Consequence: The Principle is this; *GOD is Light, and in him is no Darknefs*: then follows the Consequence, first negatively expressed; *If we say, we have Communion with him, and walk in Darknefs, we are Lyars*: and then positively in these Words; *But if we walk in the Light, as he is in the Light, we have Communion one with another, and the Blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanseth us from all Sin*. This Purification therefore, doth not dispense with our walking in the Light, since by that we are brought to it, and become the Children of Light.

It is needless here to determine the Sense of the Terms *Light* and *Darknefs*; we easily conceive that since GOD is called *Light*, the Word in this place can only signify Purity or Sanctity in itself, to which *Darknefs* being opposed, must signify Impurity or Corruption.

There is another Verse of the same Chapter, that farther confirms what we have advanced; that our Purification must be real or inherent: *If we confess our Sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and cleanse us from all Unrighteousness*. Let us weigh a little the meaning of these Words, which contain a Condition and a double Promise; the Condition is, that we *confess our Sins*, which supposes us acquainted with them, that we
detest

detest, and strive against them; without which, the Confession would not be sincere; the Promise includes Pardon and Purification.

First, *He is faithful to pardon our Sins.* But how does he pardon them? he pardons the Acts of them to those whose Dispositions are such as we have mentioned, by not interrupting the course of his sanctifying Graces towards them; we may likewise add, that he pardons them by taking away the Eternity of Punishments, and that GOD grants this favour at the Intercession of his Son.

Secondly, *He is just, to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness.* The Purification, here distinguished from Pardon, must be of a different nature. Why is this Operation here ascribed to Justice? Because Justice cannot suffer Injustice to subsist, without opposing it, 'till it is utterly destroyed.

But, it may be asked, what is wanting toward the Salvation of him, whose Sins God has pardoned?

This is what very few understand; they make not a sufficient difference between the *Acts*, and the *Source* from which those flow; between the Effects of Corruption, and Corruption itself. Let us suppose, that though the *Acts* are pardoned, the Substance of Evil is not thereby rooted up. Lop the Branches of a Tree without destroying it to the Root, your Work will always be to begin again; as long

long as the Root continues alive, it will constantly produce fresh Branches.

An inordinate Self-Love is the Root that produces in us all wicked Acts; but those Acts being pardoned, the Root still subsists; and as long as it doth so, we shall remain Unrighteous, and incapable of holding Communion with GOD.

We see then, it is not enough to obtain the pardon of the wicked Acts we have committed, if we are not also thoroughly cleansed from all Iniquity.

Though this digression, Sir, is superfluous to you, who go to the bottom of things, I cannot forbear allowing one moment's Attention to two Verses of the same Epistle, that contain the Summary of all I have now said, 1 St. John iii. 2, 3. *We know when the Son of GOD shall appear we shall be like him, and shall see him as he is; therefore every one that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

We cannot see GOD as he is, without being like him. It is impossible to be like him without being purified, not only from Acts of Injustice, but also from the whole Source of Wickedness; which is, as it were, incorporated with, and naturalized in us.

Therefore, such as in this Life have only touched on, or begun this great Work, must certainly continue it in the next, till they be-

come like JESUS CHRIST; otherwise they cannot see him as he is.

I doubt, Sir, whether after so many strong Proofs, any more Objections can well be started against the Opinion in question; I should be ready to hear them, though I should be much mistaken, if the Principles which we have laid down, will not furnish us with Solutions or Answers to all that can be advanced against it.

If it be objected, as I have heard some Persons do, that GOD is too good to inflict such Punishment upon his Children, as are supposed in a State of Purification; that in short, there is no Condemnation of those who are in CHRIST JESUS: our first Principle affords a Solution to the difficulty; viz. *That GOD, properly speaking, does not punish Men, but leaves them to reap the Fruits of what they have sown.*

Upon this Principle it must be observed, that the Souls which, after this Life, suffer Torment proportioned to the Evil which is in them, do not pass into that State of suffering by a Sentence, positively pronounced by GOD. GOD has no Torment to inflict on his Creatures; and though, in compliance with the usual way of speaking, it has been said in one of my first Letters, that Divine Justice observes an exact proportion between the Rewards it bestows, and the Punishments it inflicts, it is not therefore to be so understood,

stood, as if GOD made his Creatures suffer, or inflicted Torments on them.

Whence then can they proceed? I have already said it more than once, and it cannot be repeated too often; from themselves. To which I add, that they have let themselves grow worse and worse for want of proper Care, by sowing their Field with bad Seed, which has proved a Poison to them.

But to speak without a figure; What is *sowing to the Flesh*? It is the gratifying our Inclinations, and thereby fortifying, and rivetting those ill Habits, which at last tyrannize over us.

What is the meaning of *reaping Corruption from the Flesh*? It is experiencing the Torment resulting from that Tyranny, being deprived of the Objects, which we could not part with, feeling cutting Remorse, for having voluntarily attached ourselves to them.

Here I might make some Remarks on the Nature of Habits, and the Power they have over those, who have suffered them to grow inveterate; but perhaps, I may have occasion to do this, when I come to answer your last Difficulties. Allow me, Sir, to reserve this for another Letter.

L E T T E R XI.

Wherein these two Objections are answered; First, That if Hell is only a State of Purification, strictly speaking, there will be no Hell. Secondly, That this is placing the Souls of the Righteous with those of the Wicked.

S I R,

I Was very sensible that you proposed your last difficulties, rather to give me an opportunity of returning an Answer to them, than to communicate any farther Light to yourself.

But before I come to the Particulars concerning the Bottom of the question, it may be proper to settle the signification of the word *Hell*; for it is capable of different Senses.

By *Hell* is frequently meant a State of Punishment, Torment, Remorse, and Anguish. Sometimes the Word is used in Scripture to signify the *Grave*; and, if our Divines had not in several places translated it in this last Sense, we should have found the word *Hell* much oftner in Scripture, and applied to Subjects which cannot relate to the Reprobate; as might be shewn in many instances.

However, as Words receive their Signification only from the Ideas annexed to them, to avoid all ambiguity, and keep to the most common

common Acceptation of them, we shall understand by the word *Hell*, a State of Torment, Remorse and gnawing Worms, &c. which is the Portion of the Reprobate. By the *Reprobate* I here mean, not Persons predestinated to Damnation, as several imagine; but such as have employed their Liberty, only in resisting the Truth, by stifling the Reproofs of Conscience, till they have at last scarce heard its Language.

I now return to your Question, and say, that though Hell is supposed to be but of finite Duration, it is not therefore less Hell; if it may in some sense be called a State of Purification, it is only such in regard to its Design and Use; as it will end at last, and restore Souls to an Union with GOD, after it has entirely consumed in them all Iniquity. But in regard to the Pains and Torments proper to it, we may justly call it *Hell*, and take the word in the whole Extent of the Ideas given us of that State in Scripture.

In all these respects, we may consider it as a State of *weeping and gnashing of Teeth*; a State of *Privation* and *Darkness*; a State of positive Torments, faintly represented under the Notion of a *Lake of Brimstone*; a State of *devouring Hunger* and *Thirst*, in opposition to the Pleasures which Men have tasted in this World; a State of Shame and mortifying Confusion, in opposition to Vain-Glory and Love of Praise; a State of Remorse and interior

terior Anguish, occasion'd by a quick Sense of our being the only Authors of all the Woes we endure ; and this in opposition to Security and false Confidence.

In short, we may even look on it as an *Eternal Fire*, or an Eternity of Torments, in respect to what the Damned will certainly feel ; for there is good reason to believe, that, since the Scripture represents the Duration of their Torment, as an Eternity, it will appear so to them, not only by the Number of Years and Ages it shall swallow up, but likewise because the least part of Time will seem to them an Eternity.

When therefore we suppose Hell-Torments will one day end, we don't depart from the Ideas which both holy Scripture and good Sense give us of it. When speaking of the Eternity of Hell, we may even make use of the very Terms in which it is described, such as an *Eternal Fire*, a *Worm that never dieth* ; and it is but too probable, as I just now observed, that the Sufferers of those dreadful Torments will reckon every Hour an Age, and every Age an Eternity.

I come now to your second Difficulty, which is, That by my Hypothesis, the Souls of the *Just* and the *Reprobates* are placed together ! By no means ; for in the Sense which we have given to the word *Hell*, it will not be the Portion of the Righteous, but only of the Wicked.

But,

But, say you, what Place will you then assign to the Righteous? I own, were it my business here to determine their Situation or Place of Abode, I should be put to a non-plus; for we have no Ideas of the manner of the Existence of Spirits, nor of the Place they occupy; the most general Opinion is, that they don't occupy Place, but this I do not pretend to determine.

I shall only observe, that when we speak of Place, in order to denote the Happiness or Misery of Spirits separated from Bodies, we can only form such Ideas of it, as are widely different from Truth: for if they are Spirits, external Objects can make no impression on them, and therefore, their Happiness or Misery doth not depend on the Place they occupy, even though they were supposed capable of occupying it, but solely on their good or bad Disposition; which is exactly the Scheme of the *English* Divines, mentioned in one of my former Letters; to avoid Impropriety of Speech, we ought to substitute the Term *State* or *Situation*, instead of that of *Place*.

On this foot, we need be at no great pains to assign the Righteous their Portion; I speak of those righteous Persons, whose Sanctification is not finished; and we shall without scruple assert, that they will be *happy or miserable, in proportion to the good or bad State of their inner Man.*

This Consequence flows from our second Principle, *That the measure of Holiness, is the measure of Happiness*; and you may remember, Sir, the Remarks I made on it in my Ninth Letter, that those in whom *Good shall be found to have the ascendant over Evil*, will for that reason be *more Happy than Miserable*, &c. I shall not here repeat what I have already said on that Subject.

I shall only observe, that we may, without falling into Mistake, call that a *middle State*, which is a sort of *Medium* between *perfect Happiness* and what we have call'd *Hell*; and this *middle State* will be the Portion of Souls moderately virtuous, in whom Righteousness has not yet destroyed all Unrighteousness. However, tho' we speak of this as a *State* in the singular Number, we do not thereby exclude a great diversity of States, or different Degrees, according to the degree of Righteousness or Unrighteousness that shall be found in each Soul.

Sir, I don't know whether I have sufficiently answered your last Difficulties; but if you have any more to propose, I'll gladly answer them as well as I can. *I am, &c.*

The Answer to the Eleventh LETTER.

S I R,

IF I durst venture to beg of you some farther Illustration of the Subject, it should not

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not be concerning the Truth or Reality of this State of Purification, of which I am fully satisfied; but on the Manner and Nature of the Pains the Soul must there undergo. This, perhaps, may be a piece of Indiscretion; but I hope I shall have no more fresh Difficulties to trouble you with, after this Question is answered.

L E T T E R XII.

Wherein is enquired what the Nature of the Pains of the State of Purification may probably be; and whether the Habits we have contracted in this Life, will subsist in the next.

S I R,

IT is no easy Task you have laid upon me in your last Letter. When we undertake to determine too nicely, in things of which we have no Certainty, either from Experience or positive Revelation, we run the hazard of falling into Mistakes.

The Question you have proposed is of this sort; for Experience gives us no Information of the matter, except it be by Reflection on what passes in this Life: Conscience and Revelation do indeed discover the Principles of it; but as to the full detail of Circumstances, we are left entirely in the dark, and can never speak of it with too much caution; we can

only propose Conjectures ; and on that foot I shall speak of it.

First, then, We may suppose that the Soul at its departure from the Body, hath a strong Sense of the *Impressions* of *Truth*; the same *Truth*, which is a pleasant Light to pure Souls, is, on the contrary, exceeding painful to those, who are yet in a State of Imperfection ; it is even so intolerable to the *Reprobate*, that they would rather be crushed by the fall of *Rocks* and *Mountains*, as it is expressed in the *Apocalypse*, than be exposed to the shocking Impression which that Light makes on them.

But how is it possible, that the same Light should be pleasant to some, and intolerable to others ? Because it shews every one the true state of things, and particularly the situation of his Inner Man.

To some it discovers the Harmony which subsists between the Divine Attributes, and the Dispositions of their own Souls, the Conformity between the *Copy* and the *Original*; in a word, it lets them see they have no Inclination or Propensity left, but that of being re-united to their Center ? What can be more delightful than such a discovery ?

To others, it discovers a Disproportion and extreme Opposition, between the Perfections of GOD, and their own inward Dispositions ; Inclinations prone to things sensible, deep-rooted Habits which strongly oppose the flight of the Soul toward Sovereign Goodness, a
Stock.

Stock of Self-Love so inveterate, that they see it in spite of themselves, as the Center in which all their Desires are united. What can be more mortifying than a discovery of this nature?

Let us now come to something more particular; I would have you observe by the way, that I do not here repeat the distinction of different degrees; because I have already spoke of it several times: It will be proper to suppose it wherever it shall be necessary.

The Effects of this penetrating Light, must produce most lively and painful Sentiments, which are the necessary Consequences of those already mentioned.

First, The Privation of the Objects to which we have been so much attached, must needs be very bitter.

Secondly, The full, entire, and uninterrupted View of ourselves, whereby we see a World of Iniquity, which we had never known till that Moment.

Thirdly, A distinct Knowledge of the true or real Worth of things, by which we shall see the folly of having preferr'd the *visible* to the *invisible*.

Fourthly, A most exact remembrance of the whole course of our past Lives; of the Graces we have received, and the small use we have made of them; of the loss of time, of which we till then knew not the Value; in a word, of the secret resistance made to the

Reproofs of *Truth*, which we have industriously avoided to hear, in order to procure ourselves a false Repose.

Fifthly, The Grief we feel on seeing ourselves fast bound by Habits contrary to Sanctity; the Conviction we shall then have, that we ourselves are the Authors of them, and that they are come to such a height, only by repeated voluntary Acts, which we would not forsake.

Sixthly, The Violence we must do ourselves, before we can produce Acts entirely contrary to those Habits; for every one knows that a Habit can be destroyed only by contrary Acts, more frequent and vigorous than those which form'd it. We do with pleasure, things in themselves most difficult, when we have once acquired a Habit. But what is pleasant to some, would become painful to others, who have contracted contrary Habits.

Let us suppose two Persons; one a *Tumbler* or *Rope-dancer*, accustomed from his Youth to bodily Exercise, and passionately fond only of such Exercises. The other a *Philosopher*, involved in profound Meditation, and accustomed from his Youth, to pass whole Days and Nights in his Study, without being ever fatiated with Reading and Knowledge. Endeavour to make them exchange Professions: Put the *Tumbler* in the *Philosopher's* place, bid him divert himself with the *Folio's*: order him to meditate three fourths of every Day,
remove

remove from his View all Objects that may distract his Thoughts. On the other hand, put the *Philosopher* in the *Tumbler's* place, make him ramble up and down the Country, dance upon the Rope, and play a thousand Harlequin Tricks upon a Stage.

Then ask each of them how he likes his new State. They will both tell you they are on the Rack, that this kind of Life is insupportable to them. The *Philosopher* will envy the Condition of the *Tumbler*, and the *Tumbler* that of the *Philosopher*; neither of them will be able to imagine, that the other can be miserable in a Profession, in which he himself took so much delight.

Almost every one finds by daily Experience, that what appears to him difficult, is so in regard to him, only because he is not accustom'd to it, or because he has contracted contrary Habits.

But it may be asked, how Habits contracted in this Life can be preserved in the next? External Actions will not take place there. External Exercises will indeed be quite abolished in that State; but, as those outward Acts, which we here produce, are only the Effects of our Wills, which command all our Limbs, the Dissolution of the Limbs can never annihilate the Cause that put them into Action; that is as vigorous as ever, although it be deprived of Instruments to execute its Orders. A Person passionately fond of Gaming, if you pluck

pluck out his Eyes, and tye his Hands, cannot in that state gratify his Passion; but that Passion would not be less violent; perhaps it would even receive double Strength from the Obstacles in his way.

Habits therefore reside in the Soul, that *wills*, and commands; not in the Body, that *obeys*. True it is, that in this Life the irregular Motions of the Body or Constitution, may contribute to excite various Passions; but the *Will* can suffer only by its own free *Consent*, which it may either give or refuse.

It is by this Consent that the Passions, which at first were only in the *Constitution*, insinuate themselves into the *Will*, and render it equally disordered with themselves. Thus the Rebellions of the Constitution become Acts of the Will, the Repetition of which soon grows into a Habit, as voluntary as the Acts themselves were.

The Soul, when it leaves the Body, does not carry its Constitution with it; but it is certain that it carries its own *Will*, and the Habits that depend upon it.

But still it will be objected, May not the same thing befall a Soul in its separate State, that happens to several Persons in this Life, who being for a time passionately fond of certain Pleasures, insensibly lose all Relish for them, without committing any Violence on themselves? If we observe, we shall find that it is not the Love of Pleasure which such Persons

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sons lose, but the pleasure they took in this or that Object. A new Object affords them greater delight, for which reason they quit the first. They are so far from losing the Love of Pleasure, when they are disgusted at one particular Object, that they are determined in their Choice by the same Love of Pleasure.

Here I except those Persons in whom Conversion and the Love of GOD gradually surmount their worldly Inclinations; but we may be assured, that this will not be done without Violence; our Saviour undoubtedly knew what trouble it would cost a Man, when he compares the Pain it would give, to the pulling out of an Eye, &c.

Hence we may conclude, that all Passions and Habits that seem to slacken or be destroyed, without some Struggle on our part, have only substituted another Object in the place of a former; it is a Child who does not cry when you take his Play-thing from him, because you give him another which he likes better. Nothing is more common than the Reality of this Instance; and it is to no purpose for a Man to be displeased with himself upon the easiness he finds in disengaging himself from certain Objects. The Disgust they inspire, is the sole Cause of it; he parts with them only to make himself amends elsewhere.

But in the next Life there will be no such thing; the Soul will there find none of its favourite Objects or Amusements; it will see
itself

itself *alone*; and that View will be more terrible than we can at present imagine.

The sight of ourselves is one of the most insupportable Torments in this World. A Man can bear the weight of the most painful Labours, who would not be able to endure the constant View of himself one whole Day. And yet this View of ourselves is so confused, so transient, and we see so many other things with ourselves, that we never see ourselves as we really are.

When the Soul shall be separated from all things, we shall see ourselves in a very different manner; when there shall be no more Intervals, either for Sleep or the other Necessities of Life, or for conversing with other Men, (Intervals which give great relief to those who cannot endure Self-inspection) when we shall be no longer able to cover the *bottom* of our Intentions with specious Pretexts, when we shall be forced to open our Ears to the Rebukes of Conscience, and the Truth will speak so loud, that we can no longer evade it. That *Truth* which we obstinately refuse to listen to in this Life, will then be in its *Kingdom*, we must hear it, how mortifying soever its Lessons may prove.

There the Learned will find the Uselessness of most of their Studies, that have not led them to the knowledge of the Supreme Good; there they will look upon the Subjects of their grand Disputes, as so many mere Nothings.

There

There the Divines themselves, who imagined they preached the purest Doctrine, who with a well-meant Zeal have opposed the Truth, whilst they intended to oppose Error, will be no less surprized than afflicted at the sight of their past Obstinaey and Prejudices. The Impression which their Decisions may probably have made on others, will prove no small pain to them; and who knows but the Books they wrote in that Spirit, may aggravate their Affliction?

There those who sought their own Glory, and the Applause of their Auditors, will be covered with Confusion; their Learning and Eloquence will pass current no longer. If they have the least grain of true Zeal for the Advancement of Piety, that alone will be of service to them. May not what St. Paul tells the *Corinthians*, be properly applied here? That he *who hath raised a bad Structure, upon a good Foundation, shall indeed be saved, yet so as by Fire; but his Work shall be burnt, being of combustible Stuff, as Wood, Hay, and Stubble, &c.* Thus those who have taught several Errors, but with a good Intention, will lose the Fruit of their Labour, but the Foundation of their Intention will subsist in the midst of the Fire, which shall consume all the rest; nor is there any need for supposing a material Fire; GOD himself is a *consuming Fire* for all Error and Unrighteousness.

There

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There the sincerely pious will find themselves very far from what they thought themselves; and the advantageous Opinion Mankind entertained of them will inhanche their Confusion: there the whole Detail of the divine Bounties, and their own Ingratitude, will be set before their eyes; and this View will contain in it all that is most strongly afflicting.

There, what we esteem great in this World, will appear a mere nothing; every thing will vanish before the infinite Being and supreme Cause.

But nothing will give Men so much pain, as the knowledge of Truths not reduced to practice, and the Injury done to their Neighbour, by not giving him a good Example; and who knows to what degree all those Reflections may afflict separate Souls? If the greatest Miseries we endure here are only the Effects of Sin, who can certainly know how tormenting and bitter the Cause itself may prove to a Soul, which will feel its whole Force? The Saints who in this Life have felt something of it, such as *David, Asaph, Heman, Jeremy, Job, &c.* being unexceptionable Witnesses, can inform us in that point.

Here an Objection may be urged, from what I have elsewhere advanced, That the *Measure of Holiness constitutes the Measure of Happiness*; and consequently, that those in whom Good shall prevail above Evil, must be
more

more happy than miserable. If so, says the Objector, the State you just now described, can relate to only those Souls in which *Evil* outweighs *Good*; for you represent them in a most distressed and painful Situation.

To this I reply, that I do not positively determine to which Class, what I just now said may be applied; they are only general Expressions, that must vary according to the different Degrees of Perfection or Imperfection. However, not to wander from the *Thesis* we have laid down, I say, it does not thence follow, that every Soul in which the Principle of *Good* is more prevalent than that of *Evil*, must therefore actually be in a State more pleasant than tormenting. This sounds like a Paradox; but the following Examples will illustrate it.

A Kingdom harassed with Civil War, where the loyal Party is stronger than that of the Rebels, will by that means be in a fair way to have Peace and Tranquillity; but the Inhabitants of this Kingdom cannot enjoy a perfect Peace, till the loyal Party has gained a compleat Victory; whilst the War continues, they will always have a share in the Troubles and Confusions that are inseparable from it. Thus, though by their Advantages over the Enemy, they will be more happy than miserable, yet their Situation would be actually more distressed than pleasant.

Hence we may easily conceive, that a Soul

in which the Principle of *Good* is more prevalent than that of *Evil*, must feel a greater Sense of the Pain of *Evil*, whilst the Struggle continues, than of the Enjoyment of *Good*: And this we see verified every day, in the case of bodily Health; a Man who has a Principle of Health stronger than that of Sickness, whose Blood and noble Parts are in good order, is in the main more healthy than sick; but, though the Pain he suffers be not dangerous, yet he cannot enjoy the Benefit of Health, till he is free from all manner of Pain; he is even more sensible of a little Ailment, than of the Health of his whole Body.

But it may be asked, Why do not the most imperfect Souls endure in this Life Pains in proportion to the bad State of their inner Man? Because the Soul, while in the Body, is in a sort of Lethargy, that makes it insensible of its greatest Calamities; the more imperfect it is, and employed on sensible Objects, the more it is a Stranger to its own inward Disorders.

A Soul that disengages itself in this Life from the Senses, and is employed on invisible Objects, has a watchful Eye over what passes within itself, is much more sensible of the least Deformity. When being disengaged from all that is material, the Divine Light shall dart fully upon it, how much more sensible will it be of what may ever injure infinite Holiness? Hence

Hence we may likewise draw an Argument for the Necessity of Purification; I ask those who deny it, Can a Man be saved without Repentance? Can he really repent, without knowing and feeling his Misery? But how many moderately virtuous Persons are there, who in this Life never knew the least part of their inward Misery, and yet certainly cannot be ranked with the Reprobate?

I further ask, Whether the Sorrow of true Repentance ought to flow from the Love of GOD, or the Fear of Hell? But how many of those last mentioned know Religion, only by Rewards and Punishments, and are Strangers to the Amiability of GOD? It is not therefore the Love of him, that is the Cause of their Sorrow.

To this it may be answered, That this * Motive may be excited in a Soul at the last Moments. And though it should produce but one single Act of the Love of GOD, that

* This way of speaking favours of a Metamorphosis, or rather of Fiction; nothing is more contrary to the Nature of Man, than to pretend to excite Motives in him; the most real Motives are very often those he least perceives, and which prompt him to Action, without his reflecting on them. Whatever is excited suddenly, is borrowed and counterfeit, or at least imaginary. Imagination may be excited, and certain Motions raised in the Machine, which are termed *Contrition*, and *Acts of the Love of God*; but I would know whether these fine Words will make the Thing real, and whether they'll pass for current Coin in the invisible World.

that would be sufficient to save it. Now I reply, That an Act so suddenly produced is very equivocal; but supposing it sincere, and strong enough to secure a Soul from Damnation, it does not thence follow, that therefore it will put it in the actual possession of the Object.

The Soul must first know the Object it designs to love. It must know its self, and what is either to be destroyed, or built up there: which will not be the Work of a few days.

In reality, the Acts here supposed, how sincere soever they may be, are rather Acts of *desiring* to love GOD, than Acts of real Love. The Desire a Man may have of pulling down an old Building, in order to raise a new one, is many Removes from the actual Execution of that Design.

After all, can any one acquainted with Man imagine, that some good Wishes and Desires are sufficient to change the Bottom of his Heart, and make him a new Man?

I believe, Sir, it would be superfluous to push our Conjectures any farther about the Nature of the Purification of Souls separated from the Body; it would be certainly more useful to draw from them practical Rules for our Conduct; which I leave to your Reflection.

P. S. I shall, by way of Postscript, answer the following Question; *viz.* Whether those

those who have wanted the Means of Salvation in this Life, and have undergone all manner of Sufferings, must endure the pain of a Purification in the other?

To which I answer, That bodily Sufferings do not purify us *physically*, but only so far as they may serve as Means to the Person who endures them, for entering into himself, and knowing himself better; as they are proper for delivering him from Dissipation and Sensuality, and exercise him in Patience and Resignation. In all these respects, Sufferings are so many Steps to, or distant means of Sanctity, as the Apostle insinuateth, when he tells us, That *God chastiseth us for our Benefit, to the end, we may be Partakers of his Holiness*; but the near and immediate Means are purely spiritual; such as the knowledge of Truth, and of ourselves, from which other sorts of Sufferings may arise, but of a very different nature from the former.

I say then, in answer to the Question, that it is highly probable, that those whose Lives have been one continued Series of bodily Sufferings, and who have not had an opportunity of knowing the Truth, must nevertheless pass through a State of *Purification*; but there is reason to presume it will give them but little Pain, and will, perhaps, in some respects, afford more Comfort than Bitterness. This may be inferred from the Certainty of a *Compensation*; these have had
their

their Good in this Life; it is but just they should be comforted in that which is to come.

But a physical Reason may likewise be assigned for this, drawn from the preceding Truths.

First, Such Souls as we have just now supposed, have already, by their Sufferings, made the first Steps toward Sanctity, or have had the negative Means, so far as the Inclinations to Pleasure and Vanity were never strengthened in them, or converted into Habits; from whence it follows, that when the Truth shall be manifested in them, it will find the less Deformity, and fewer Irregularities to rectify.

2dly, The Manifestation of Truth till then not known, and which they never have resisted, cannot but occasion a very agreeable Surprise. Those Souls, whose spiritual Faculties had been, as it were, benumbed, by a multitude of Obstacles, shall find themselves, at their Separation from the Body, like a blind Man, who recovers his Sight, and even knows not that it is possible to see.

In the 3d place, Such Souls will have nothing to suffer from a Privation of sensible Objects, or from the Impressions that the Enjoyment of such Objects might have made upon them; far from being habituated to the Taste of Pleasure, they have been accustomed only to Pain; and this single Consideration will make a very great difference betwixt them, and

and those of contrary Habits: for as it is extremely painful to pass from Enjoyment to Privation, (which becomes a real Pain) so the Transition from Pain to Rest is exquisitely pleasant.

Hence it is easy to conceive, that the Purification of such Souls, will not inhanche their Anguish, but prove rather an Alleviation of it, by the Satisfaction they will receive from the Discovery of Truth, and the Recovery of the Use of their Faculties, in regard to it.

This same Truth will not indeed fail to rebuke them for all it finds unjust in them, and reproach them in particular with what they have committed against the Light of their Conscience; this they must certainly undergo, and it will be more or less painful to them, as they have sinned more or less voluntarily. But there is reason to believe, that the Truth finding them flexible, will make much less violent Impressions on them, than on Souls accustomed to Resistance, and hardened against all its Admonitions.

From hence we may understand the Reason of those repeated Declarations of our Saviour, *Blessed are ye who mourn now, for ye shall be comforted; but woe to you who now enjoy Pleasure, for ye shall cry and lament.* This State then seems to be only ordained to make amends to some for the Hardships they have endured, and punish others for the abuse of the good things they have here enjoyed.

22 ANSWER to LETTER XII.

However, if we consider things as they are in their own Nature, we shall find, that this Compensation does not proceed from an arbitrary Will in GOD, either to reward or punish, but is the natural Effect resulting from each Man's Disposition, when he leaves this World.

ANSWER to LETTER XII.

S I R,

THE Illustrations contained in your last, leave me no more Difficulties to propose. When I happened to form any one, on perusing your Letter, I soon met with a Solution: it would be much more useful, as you justly observe, to make those Truths subservient to the Conduct of Life; allow me therefore to intreat you to communicate your farther Reflections on this Subject.

You have hitherto handled the State of *Purification*, independently of *Restoration*; in condescension to those, who would not admit of the latter. Can you not now unite those two Points, and shew what Instructions and Uses may be drawn from them both? I hope you will not refuse me that Satisfaction.

LET.

L E T T E R XIII.

Wherein is shewn, that, admitting the different Sentiments of Divines together, both the Restoration and Purification, as here proposed, are proved.

S I R,

Nothing is more easy than to unite the two Subjects, which we have hitherto considered separately. They not only agree perfectly well, but, which is more, are inseparably connected; for, to take the matter right, one is only the End of the other, the *Purification* of Souls having no other End, but their *Restoration*.

Both of them shew us the unchangeable Attributes of the Deity, and unravel those Obscurities and seeming Contrarieties, which appear to us to be opposite to the Wisdom of his Proceedings.

When we go back to the Origin of all things, we find nothing there but *God alone*, possessing in himself the Fulness of *Being, Life, and Happiness*; in short all, Perfection.

When we come down to what we know of his Works, we find Creatures perfectly good, the noblest of which bears the Image of his Creator, and for whom all other Creatures were formed. Essential Goodness can produce nothing but what is good. Such

were all his Works, when they came first out of his hands; of which sovereign Wisdom bears witness, *And God saw all that he had made, and behold it was very good.* Gen. ch. i.

After this, it is hard to conceive how *moral* and *physical Evil* come into the World; if GOD has created nothing but what was good, whence proceed the *Evils* wherewith the Earth is filled?

Let us here say, that GOD, who is the Author of all *Being* and *Reality*, cannot be the Author of *Evil*; since, properly speaking, *Evil* is no *Reality*; it is rather a *Negation* of *Being*, a *Defect* of *Reality* and *Perfection*, a Disorder crept in among Creatures well ordered.

Moral Evil is an accidental Disorder to *Spirits*, as *Natural Evil* is to the corporeal Nature. *Moral Evil* must be the Cause of *physical Evil*.

It is plain, that corporeal Nature, or Matter, not being of the number of free Agents, could not of itself deviate from the Order in which it was created. This Deviation or Disorder must be ascribed to Spirits, who by an ill use of their Liberty, have introduced Confusion among themselves, and all subordinate Beings; that is, through all material Nature; which, being put under Man, must share his Disaster; as the Apostle assures us, *The Creatures are subjected to Vanity and Bondage,*

dage, by the Will of him who hath subjected them thereto, viz. by the Will of Man.

Behold then the Works of GOD fallen from their original Beauty, and the noblest of his Creatures, even his own Image, disfigured! But is the Damage irreparable? Is the great Architect neither able nor willing to find out an Expedient for restoring the Works of his own hands?

This is a Subject of great dispute among the Divines, who are distinguished by the Name of *Particularists* and *Universalists*, each of them maintaining a *Thesis* built upon some Truths, though indeed they know but one part of them; could they once unfold them, they would soon agree. Perhaps the Contents of these Letters concerning a *Restoration* and *Purification* may prove the Key to the whole. This is what I shall now endeavour to illustrate.

The above-mentioned Divines agree in a general Answer to the Question proposed, That GOD both *can* and *will* do it; the first of these Propositions is founded on the *Omnipotence* of the Creator; the second on his *Goodness*. But then they differ, in the following Points.

The *Particularists* restrain this Will to a small number, called by them the *Elect*; whereas the *Universalists* maintain, that GOD will save all Men.

The former reply, " That the Will of
 " GOD is efficacious, and therefore he cannot
 " fall short of his Purpose ; that if he willed
 " all Men to be saved, he would save them
 " effectually ; that it is annihilating his Om-
 " nipotence to say, He desires to save all
 " Men, but that he cannot."

The *Universalists*, on the other hand, main-
 tain, " That it is injurious to the Goodness
 " of GOD, to say, that he can save all Men,
 " and will only save a part ; that it is accu-
 " sing him of Cruelty, who desires that none
 " should perish, but that all may come to
 " Repentance ; that if this Will hath not its
 " Effect, the Fault is not on GOD's part,
 " but on Man's, who resists the gracious
 " Will of his Creator."

Hence it appears, that the Divines of both
 Denominations, after they have assented to
 the *Thesis* in general, deny it when they come
 to *Particulars* ; the former injure the Ideas
 we have of the Goodness of GOD, the latter
 those we entertain of his Omnipotence. Let
 us now see whether we cannot unfold the Rid-
 dle : and,

First, We grant the *Particularists*, that the
 Will of GOD is efficacious ; that he cannot
 be frustrated of his Purpose ; and that all those
 whom he hath predestinated to Salvation,
 and for whom CHRIST died, will be in-
 fallibly saved.

2dly, We likewise grant the *Universalists*,
 that GOD wills all Men, should be saved ;
 that

that he destines no one to Misery ; that CHRIST has tasted Death for all Men, and designed, by his being lifted up from Earth, to draw all Mankind to him.

This seems contradictory ; we shall be able to clear up the matter, if we here join together the different *Theses* of each Party.

The Acts of the Divine Will are efficacious.
Partic.

God wills all Men to be saved. Univers.

Therefore, all Men will one day be saved.

All those whom God has predestinated to Salvation, will infallibly be saved. Partic.

God predestinates none to Wrath, but to Salvation. Univers.

Therefore all will be infallibly saved.

All those for whom CHRIST died, will partake of Salvation. Partic.

JESUS CHRIST tasted Death for all, and was lifted up from Earth, to draw all Men to him. Univers.

Therefore all will partake of Salvation, and at last be drawn after him.

I foresee the Conclusion will be denied, and the Argument retorted as follows, *viz. Salvation is promised only to those who are sanctified.*

Infinitely more die, who are not sanctified, than who are.

Therefore all Men will not be saved.

Now to shew that the first Conclusion is just, and the second false, we need only join to these two Propositions a third drawn from the Principles of the *Universalists*.

Salvation is promised only to those who are sanctified. God wills that all Men come to Repentance, and the knowledge of the Truth; all of them do not attain to it in this Life.

Therefore this must be done in the other.

In order to support this Conclusion, which is a new Proposition, let us make use of some Principles of the same Divines.

God offers all Men the Means of Sanctification; but commits no Violence on their Liberty; all do not make their advantage of the Profer; all do not make use of those Means to come to Repentance and Sanctification.

I ask now, Shall the Purposes of GOD be frustrated by the Resistance of Man? Will he not find some Method for bringing them to Repentance and Holiness, without forcing their Liberty? If they do not correspond with those Means in this Life, which is but of a Minute's Duration, when compared with Eternity, will he confine his Concern for the Restoration of his Work to that short Span? Shall not he who is so well acquainted with all its Springs, be able to bring it back to himself at last?

To this Question I shall oppose a Principle of the *Particularists*, which will serve as an Answer to it, *viz.*

The Gifts and Calling of God are without Repentance; all those whom God has predestinated to Salvation, are also predestinated to the Means thereof.

According to the *Universalists*, all are predestinated to Salvation: *Therefore*

Therefore all are predestinated to the Means of Salvation.

The Will of GOD must be accomplished sooner or later, and is not restrained to any Time or Place. If then there are numberless Creatures who have in this Life wanted Means sufficient for Salvation, or have not made use of them when afforded; they will be allow'd Time, when sooner or later they will make an advantage of them; because then they will know their Value; and this Time is no other than that of the *Purification* of Souls after this Life, which is designed only for their *Restoration*.

This Purification may be divided into two Classes, each containing almost an infinite Diversity of Degrees; one may bear the Name of *Hell*, in regard of the Obduracy of those who shall endure its Torments, and the Heat of the Fire that will consume them; the other may be called a *Middle State*, because it will serve to purify those Souls that are but indifferently virtuous, whose Sanctification, while here, was but begun. They will both tend, at last, to restore the Image of GOD in all Men.

I said, in the beginning of this Letter, *That the knowledge of these Truths manifested to us the unchangeable Attributes of the Deity, and cleared up to us a great many Obscurities, and seeming Contradictions.* We have seen, that the Contradictions among Divines are hereby

effectually reconciled, and that they differ only as they separate Doctrines which ought to be united.

I will here add, that hereby the *Goodness* of GOD, his *Omnipotence*, *Wisdom*, *Justice*, *Holiness*, *Faithfulness*, and *Mercy*, are fully manifested to us.

First, I say, his *Goodness*, as GOD wills the *Happiness* of all his Creatures, and their Return to the primitive Perfection they had received at his hands.

His *Omnipotence*, as it hence appears that the Will of GOD is efficacious; that his Arm is not shortned, and that he is able, sooner or later, to accomplish all his Designs.

His *Faithfulness*, as it thereby appears, that his Gifts and his Calling are without Repentance; that having once destined Man to Bliss, he doth not desist from his first Design.

His *Mercy*, as he furnishes the most rebellious with the Means of Sanctification, and this without fixing any Bounds to it; as he forgets the Outrages, Contempt, and Disobedience of wicked Men; in a word, as he extends the Effects of this Mercy, not to some only, but to all without exception, not only in this Life, but also in the Life to come.

What shall we think of the *Justice* and *Holiness* of GOD? Will not they have their Course? Will not *Goodness* and *Mercy* oppose them? Certainly *Justice* and *Holiness* are not contrary to *Goodness* and *Mercy*; and it is impossible

possible that these should interrupt the Effects of the other Attributes. Let us say rather, that they concur in the same Design of purifying Men, although here *Justice* and *Holiness* manifest themselves in a more positive manner.

His *Justice* is manifested, by his leaving every one to reap the Fruits of what he has sown, by making *Tribulation* and *Anguish* fall upon every Soul that doth evil, and making them then eat the Fruit of their own Doings and Devices.

His *Holiness* is manifested, as it hence appears, that GOD doth not design to be reunited to his Creatures, before he has sanctified them; there can be no Communion in them between *Light* and *Darkness*; till they become *Children of the Light*, Divine Justice will be the same to them, that Fire is to Hay and Stubble. And this Fire will never cease to burn, till all *Unrighteousness* is consumed. Then only *Justice* will cease to be rigorous, without ceasing to be just.

Let us likewise add, that this Purification manifesteth the depth of the Divine *Wisdom*, in having found out a way how to replace all Creatures in their original State at last, by bringing them back, sooner or later, to that Holiness from which they were so far removed; and that by the Operations of *Truth* and *Justice*, without offering Violence to their Liberty.

The Divine Wisdom farther appears, in that the Work of Redemption ultimately tends to destroy all the Enemies of GOD, and extends its Effects, without measure, to all his Creatures, till having nothing foreign in them, GOD himself may be *All in All*. *Surely this proceeds from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in Counsel, and excellent in Working.*

Let us here farther observe, that nothing is more proper for justifying *Providence*, not only in regard to the *Blessings* and *Miseries*, which seem in this Life to be distributed with so much inequality; but particularly in regard to the Means of Salvation, which it bestows on some liberally, and seems to refuse them to others.

Since the Creation of the World, infinitely more Men have been unprovided with those Means, than have enjoyed them. Though all Men have had the Testimony of Conscience within them, the Obstacles from without, together with the Bias of irregular Inclinations, have been too strong, and almost insurmountable to this Principle of Truth, which was, as it were, buried in them.

What Comparison is there, as to the Means of Salvation, between the *Jewish Nation*, from *Moses* to CHRIST, and the numberless multitude of the Pagan World? And what Comparison is there in this respect between *Christians*, and an infinity of Barbarians, who

who hardly know any Distinction of Good and Evil; wild and savage People, who have little more of Humanity than the bare Form?

What Comparison is there between Christians themselves, some of whom are, in respect of others, like so many Beasts of Burden, bowed down from their Youth, under the Weight of Toil and Labour, which scarce allow them time to enquire, whether they have Souls to cultivate and prepare for a future Life? And who, on observing such Disproportions between those who by nature are of equal Dignity, can discern Impartiality in GOD?

Certainly nothing can justify this Conduct, but the knowledge of a State of *Purification*; where those who have been unprovided with the means of coming to the Knowledge of Truth in this Life, will find them in another.

May we not here apply, what St. *Peter* says, That *CHRIST preached to the Spirits in Prison, that had been disobedient in the days of Noah*? To what purpose should *CHRIST* preach to them, were it not to bring them to Repentance, and the knowledge of Truth? But whether *CHRIST* exercised this Office towards them in Person, or merely by manifesting Truth to them, is of small importance to determine. Some Divines are of opinion, that the Article of the Creed, *He descended into Hell*, relates to this; and that those other Words of the same *Epistle* amount to the same Sense; *For this cause was the Gospel preached*
also

also to them that were dead, that they might be judged according to Men in the Flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit. 1 Epist. iv. 6. By the *Flesh*, nothing can be here meant but the Principle of Corruption, which Souls carry with them into the other Life; the *Judgment* that must be exercised upon them, the *Fire of Justice*, for the destruction of *Evil*, which must at last end in *the Life of God in the Spirit*, can only signify the Re-establishment of Souls, and their Reunion with GOD.

In whatever sense the Word *preached* is understood, it must be the Truth published and manifested to the Dead, as a means of Sanctification, which is undoubtedly glad Tidings for them.

We may farther say, that this Truth justifies the Equity of GOD, in all the dreadful Judgments he has inflicted on whole Nations, a great part whereof knew neither Good nor Evil. Not to mention the Deluge, nor the Burning of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*; how terrible was the Slaughter in all the Cities of *Canaan*, that were struck as so many declared Rebels? On how many Occasions have we seen Children die for the Iniquity of their Fathers, and Subjects for that of Princes; such as the sixty Sons of *Achab*, the ten Sons of *Saul*, the ten Sons of *Haman*, the Children of *Chorah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, and a multitude of *Israelites*, for the Sin of *David*, their King.

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In reality, did we not know, that in the other Life there will be a perfect *Compensation*, both in regard to the Means of Salvation, and *Blessings* and *Miseries*; should we not be tempted to cry out, *Is there Knowledge in the Lord, and does he weigh all Men in an equal Balance?*

What Conclusion does our Saviour draw from the disproportion that is visible in this Life, in relation to the Effects of Justice? That this Justice shall, sooner or later, have its Course on all Men. *Do you think, says he, that they who have suffered these things, are greater Sinners than others? I tell you no; but except you repent, you shall likewise perish*.*

It is evident, that all those who are in the same State of Depravation, do not in this Life suffer the same Punishments; Justice therefore will be employed on them in the other.

I should never end my Letter, should I undertake to quote all the Passages of Scripture to this purpose. It is time to conclude. You will observe, Sir, that the Truths I have met with in my way, have prevented my making the practical Inferences which I intended; but a little Reflection of your own will discover them better than any thing I can say.

* Such an Argument in the Mouth of the Son of God, who must certainly know the Compensations that Divine Justice hath in reserve for Men, ought not to be of little weight with us.

ANSWER to LETTER XIII.

S I R,

I Cannot dispense with your Remarks on the practical Uses. Though your last is a most instructive Recapitulation of the essential Parts of your preceding Letters, there will still be something wanting, if you do not shew expressly the Influence those Truths may have in rectifying our Judgments, and regulating our Conduct.

It is a Prejudice very favourable to the *Thesis* you have maintained, though it were supported by no other Proof, that at your first setting out, you established it on the unchangeable Ideas we have of the Divine Perfections, and concluded with demonstrating, that the same *Thesis* serves to place the great Harmony of those Perfections, in whatever relates to our Salvation, in a stronger Light.

The Justification of Providence, the Union of the different Sentiments of Divines, the Obscurities in the Ways of GOD, cannot flow from an erroneous *Thesis*; and this, Sir, is what I hope you'll not fail to set in its proper Light.

L E T

L E T T E R XIV.

Wherein the practical Uses, that result from the preceding Discourses, are set forth.

S I R,

THE Law and Gospel having no other End, but that of leading Men to *Charity* and *Holiness*, according to JESUS CHRIST, and St. *Paul*; every Opinion that has the least Tendency, either directly or indirectly, to lead from this End, ought to be suspected.

If the Doctrine that has been the Subject of the preceding Letters, was of this kind, I should be ready to renounce it; but if, on the contrary, it can be shewn, that it includes the strongest Motives, for every one to advance in *Holiness*, this Consideration will add a new degree of Probability to the Arguments I have already advanced.

Among Persons who have any concern for their Salvation, some are most affected with the Motive of *Love*; others are more so with that of *Fear*. I dare affirm, that these two Motives flow more naturally, and with greater Force and Certainty, from the Truths we have laid down, than from the opposite Opinion; which I think it will not be hard to demonstrate. I begin with the first kind of Motive.

I say then, if we measure the degree of *Love*, by the Perfection of the Object, and the

the Knowledge we have of it; nothing is more proper than these Truths, to make us in love with *sovereign Perfection*, because nothing appears more amiable to us, whether we consider it in itself, or in regard to us.

First, they make us consider the Deity in himself, as the Source of *Being*, *Perfection*, and *Happiness*; as that *pure Goodness* from which no *Evil* can proceed; as the *Unchangeable Being*, incapable of the least Variation.

In regard to ourselves, they make us consider him as *communicative Goodness*, that can only will to confer on or procure for his Creatures what is good.

As *unalterable and impartial Justice*, incapable of all Preference, that judges invariably of things, as they really are in themselves.

As *Mercy without measure*, which doth good to the Wicked and Ungrateful, is accessible to every Creature, and whose Effects are universal.

As *infinitely penetrating Wisdom*, which thoroughly knows all the Springs of its Work, and employs an infinite Diversity of Means to restore it to its original Perfection.

As boundless Omnipotence, *that does whatever it listeth, both in the Armies of Heaven, and amongst the Inhabitants of the Earth; whose hand none can stay from working, nor say unto it, What dost thou?*

In a word, *as the Saviour of all Mankind*, publishing his *Good Will* towards them, and
the

the Design he has formed of re-uniting them all to himself at last, by removing all Obstacles to that Union.

In reality, if any thing can make an Impression upon a Heart capable of feeling, this Idea of GOD must certainly do it ; and it will be impossible for those who know him as such, not to love him above all things.

Here I might add, for the satisfaction of those who love a detail of Particulars, that *Faith, Repentance, Patience, Hope, and the Love of our Neighbour*, flow from the same Principles.

Can *Faith* have a better Foundation than the Knowledge of a GOD, who *will* be the Saviour of all Men, and is *able* to perform whatever he *wills* ?

What more proper means for producing Repentance, than the Knowledge of a *Justice*, that certainly condemns Wickedness, and of a Mercy accessible to all such, as are willing to make war on Iniquity, 'till it is entirely destroyed ?

What is more proper for forming *Hope*, than to know that GOD has no Inclination to cast off his Creatures ; that he entertains *Thoughts of Peace, not of Evil, in order to give them such an End as they can desire* ?

What more efficacious Motive can be conceived for determining us to the Exercise of Prayer, than to know GOD under the Idea of *Communicative Goodness*, who both *can* and
will

will bestow all manner of Blessings on those, to whom he has given his own Son? What is more proper for prevailing with us to hate Sin, than to know that it is the only *Cause* of all the *Evils* with which the World is infected? In short, what is more proper for producing Patience, than to know that these very *Evils*, if rightly used, may become means our Purification?

I now come to the *Love of our Neighbour*; certainly nothing is more efficacious for rendering it universal, sincere, impartial, and communicative: To regard all Mankind as the Workmanship of GOD, formed originally after his own Image, called to recover it one day; to consider the Vices and Imperfections wherewith Men are tainted, as something foreign to their Nature, as so many grievous Distempers, that after severe Sufferings, shall at last be cured: Is any thing more proper for inspiring us with a compassionate and fraternal Love than such Considerations?

It is in this Sense, that all Men truly are, and ever will be our *Neighbours*; and may be properly called *Members* one of another, and of CHRIST himself, without which the Reprobate could neither be Members of CHRIST, nor of his Children. In this sense they may be considered as *sick Members*, that must undergo the Operations of Fire and Instruments, before they are entirely cured.

What

What greater Encouragement to labour for the Salvation of our Neighbour, than to know that our Labour will not be altogether useless; that the Seed sown in this Life, which at present seems to be choaked with Briars and Thorns, will sooner or later produce Fruit; that the Truth which Men now reject, will one day shine with full lustre in their Conscience? In short, that by labouring for our Neighbours, we labour for those who will hereafter be Members of the Universal Church; that the good Examples we set before them, and all the Pains we take for them, will sooner or later have their desired Effect? And would not this be Reward enough, though there was no other?

We may likewise add, that nothing is so proper for *rectifying our Judgments*, concerning the *Dead* or the *Dying*.

Here the Sticklers for Orthodoxy will cry out, *That we are not permitted to judge*; and yet, according to their own Principles, they cannot avoid judging. If they acknowledge no *Medium* between a sovereign Bliss and eternal Damnation, they necessarily judge that all who die, are either in one or the other of those Extremes. It is true, that in order to judge charitably, they bestow Happiness on almost all Men. But must *Charity* be opposite to *Truth*? And is it not an Injury to *Truth*, to assign the Crown of Righteousness to those, who have neither fought the good Fight, nor, perhaps,

perhaps, so much as entered upon a Course of Holiness ?

Here it may be said, it wou'd be better not to judge at all. But, is a Man Master of his Judgments, as he is of his Words ? Does not Evidence, as it appears to our Understanding, unavoidably determine us in our Judgments ? If then we maintain as a Principle, that in the next Life, there are only the two Extremes of Happiness and Misery, shall we not be naturally induced to assign each Man the Place, that seems best to suit his Conduct here ?

Upon this foot, they necessarily judge that Thousands of Creatures, who die with Dispositions contrary to Holiness, are eternally damned. It would be to no purpose to reply, that they pass no such Judgment ; we may deceive ourselves, and fancy we do not judge ; but the ground-work of our Judgments subsists, and necessarily follows the Evidence that results from our Principles.

Would we find out a sure Method not to judge of the Condition of the Dying, or to form only upright Judgments, conformable to Truth ; let us judge that every one is happy or miserable, in proportion to his good or bad Qualities ; and in so doing we can neither injure them, nor be deceived ourselves ; of which discreet Behaviour *St. Peter* gives us an Instance, when speaking of *Judas's* Death, he

he only says, that *he was gone to his own Place.*

Here then is a great comfort for Persons full of Clarity, who would be grievously affected at the Eternal Loss of so many Millions of Souls. It is certain therefore, that the Doctrine here laid down, concerning *Purification* and *Restoration*, is better calculated than any other, for inspiring us with *Universal Charity* to our Neighbour, and rectifying our Judgments concerning him.

But if the first Part of it is comfortable, and proper to make an Impression upon generous Souls, the second is no less fit to awake, by Motives of Fear, those Persons who can be affected only by Considerations of Self-Interest; but as I have already touch'd on this Head in my sixth Letter, I shall be the shorter upon it here.

Is any thing more proper for over-turning the false Maxims, so much in vogue, in which Numbers securely lull themselves asleep, than the knowledge of an *unchangeable Justice*, that constantly judges of things, as they really are; and of a *Mercy*, which is so far from being contrary to *Justice*, that concurs with it in the grand Design of purifying Mankind? This being laid down, what will become of the hopes of those, who imagine that Mercy will prevail against Justice, and stop its Course, so that they shall feel none of its Effects.

If GOD is incapable of *Anger, Provocation, and Revenge*, as we have proved ; he is incapable of being appeased, of being moved with repeated Cries, or feeling Compassion* like ours, which proceeds only from the Weakness of our Nature ; this being supposed, what will become of those flattering hopes, that we shall appease the Deity with Tears ; that on begging Grace and Mercy, he will be easily prevail'd on to relent ?

If the greatest Favour, that GOD can do Men, is to *purify* them ; and if this is the only way by which they can arrive at Happiness ; how can they desire *Mercy*, to exempt them from Purification ? Could they obtain their request, they would obtain *Eternal Torment*, since without Holiness they will never see the face of GOD.

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* But how does this agree with the numerous Declarations in Scripture, concerning the *Compassion of GOD* ? Compassion in GOD, is different from that which Man is susceptible of. The latter proceeds from the Impressions which the Sufferings of his Fellow-Creatures makes upon him ; this proves painful, and presses him to relieve his Neighbour, in order to relieve himself. But in GOD, *Compassion* is essentially the same as his *Goodness*, joined to the Knowledge of human Sufferings, and his Purpose to render Man happy, by destroying the Cause of Sufferings. Hence it is easy to conclude that GOD is incapable of the *false Compassion* ascribed to him. A Father who through Weakness, cannot endure that his Son should undergo certain painful Operations, without which he cannot be cured, increases and lengthens his Misery by a mistaken Compassion.

If the Pardon and Absolution of the wicked Acts they have committed, cannot make the Soul happy, till the *Source* from which they flow is quite drained; to what purpose are so many reiterated Petitions, that have nothing more in view but to obtain that Absolution; whilst Men give themselves no manner of trouble to root out the baneful Cause of all their Misery?

There is not any one Illusion that lulls so many Men asleep as this; for say they, provided our Sins are pardoned, every thing will then be set to rights. Thus if they do but abstain from the grosser Acts of Wickedness, they have but little Concern to rectify the Source of their Inclinations and vicious Habits, whose dismal Consequences they are utter strangers to.

But did such Persons know what they must suffer in the future Life, for having neglected in this the Cultivation of their Souls; could they conceive how bitter are the Fruits of this Negligence; they would consider things in another light.

One of the greatest Obstacles to Sanctification in this Life, is the *Love of Pleasure*, and an *Aversion to Labour*. These two Propensities make Men live from day to day; indulge themselves in all the Pleasures they can find, and avoid every thing that is hard and troublesome; in short, in making the best of the present, without disquieting themselves

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about

about future Reckonings. But did they but reflect, that by all these delays they only make their Torment a thousand degrees more exquisite, and of longer continuance; they would certainly chuse a laborious Work of some hours duration, rather than Labours whose End they know not.

There is nothing we so industriously avoid in this Life, as to hear distinctly the Rebukes of Conscience; the far greatest part of our Pleasures and Amusements, are of no other use, but to deafen us in this respect: but did we know how dear this Repose will one day cost us; that the *Reproaches* which at present wou'd be supportable, will then be changed into insupportable *Remorse*; that they will be obliged to drink the whole bitter Draught, without the least pleasant Ingredient; they would certainly resolve to hearken to the Admonitions of Truth, what pain soever they might give them.

Nothing is so intolerable to most People, as to turn their Eyes from sensible Objects, to attend to Truth and Things invisible, to make the Objects of a *future State* in some sort familiar to them. But did they consider, that sooner or later they must endure an *entire Separation* from all those Objects that flatter their Senses; that the more they are attached to them, the more painful and insupportable will be the Privation of them: Did they know, that Truth will then be the only Food
of

of the Soul; that it will prove exceeding bitter, and occasion extreme Anguish to all who have not been nourished with it in this Life; they certainly would begin to grow familiar with it, and abandon every Object that may hinder the relish of it. They would be constantly employed, in such Exercises as have a relation to those of a future Life.

Now what Consequences may not be drawn from the force of Habits; from the Torment we feel when they have taken root, and when an Attempt is made to pluck them up? And truly were we ever so little sensible of our real Interest, we should here find Motives strong enough for setting about a Work immediately, which, if deferr'd, is not only render'd much harder than at first, but must likewise be attended with great Bitterness and Anguish.

Upon the whole, I know not whether any other System can be invented, that contains Motives so efficacious for engaging Mankind to walk in the ways of real Holiness; any System which can make Religion more venerable, in the Eyes even of Libertines, or more *lovely* to the Lovers of *Truth*; that places in a clearer Light, the wonderful Harmony of the *Divine Attributes*, and the Reasons we have to love sovereign Perfection.

If you find, Sir, that I have tolerably performed the Task you laid upon me, I shall be sufficiently rewarded for my Pains.

*An ADVERTISEMENT concerning
the following LETTER.*

*Although this Letter was not designed for
the Press, yet it agreeing very well with
the Argument in question, is the reason
why it is here inserted.*

A LETTER to Mr. ***

YOU tell me, Sir, that several Persons are much better pleased with the Fourteen Letters, on the account of the Treatise on *Restoration*, than on that of *Purification*; that the former Subject gives general Satisfaction, whereas the latter creates Uneasiness, and secret Apprehensions they cannot so well get rid of.

I am to tell you, Sir, that I was in the same Case, and was willing to persuade myself, that the *Restoration* might take place without the *Purification*. I found, however, that this System was too well connected to be divided; and that the same Arguments, which prove the Non-Eternity of Hell-Torments, by necessary Consequence establish the Doctrine of *Purification*.

One of those Reasons, amongst others, is that perfect *Equity*, which must deal impartially with Men of the same Origin, and

A Letter relating to the same Subject. 149

leave every Individual to reap the Fruits of what he has sown, according to the various and infinite Proportions that shall be found in them. The Idea of Equity supposes that of Proportion; and it is probable that the most wicked will acknowledge the Divine Justice, in the proportion it will establish between them and good Men, and that they will never be able to complain, that they were weighed in an unequal Ballance.

Another way of conceiving the Matter, is, to look upon the painful Course of Purification, as a natural Consequence of the vicious Dispositions, Men carry with them to the other World, rather than as a Punishment, properly so called; which is fully illustrated in the Ninth, and following Letters: it is even a Consequence of Principles advanced in the first Letter on the Nature of Justice. If Justice has no other Tendency than to destroy *Evil* in Man, even by the Pains of Hell, must it not perform the same Office towards all? Must it not eradicate *Evil*, not only out of the Wicked, but even out of the Good, that they may be qualified for a Re-union with their Origin? And if they cannot be compleatly happy, but by the utter destruction of *Evil*, doth not infinite Goodness itself contribute to the same Design?

After all, Hell considered in this Light, is only a State of *Purification*, as the Author observes, although the Degrees of it are in-

150 *A Letter relating to the same Subject.*

finite. Whatever Name may be given to the thing, we are sure to find Consolation in this Idea, in regard to Persons we see die. We leave them to the place assigned them by *Justice*, without forcing Charity so far, as to lodge them all in Heaven.

Hell again, in the common acceptation of the Word, is too dismal a Place for any to be doomed to but the most abandon'd of Men; now the distance between Heaven and Hell is too great, and the Idea of Proportion deeply engraved on the Heart of Man, never allows him to be satisfied with such Disproportions.

After what has been said, though these Reasons should not prove so satisfactory, though we could elude their force by specious Arguments; I very much question, whether we can at all times persuade ourselves of the contrary; a secret Apprehension often makes us dread, that the Consolation pretended to be taken from Scripture, is misapplied, and perhaps misunderstood.

All things duly considered, I think, that if those who will not admit of the Idea of a *Purification*, would but leave the Question in suspense, there would be less danger on that side, than in too great an assurance on the other, which may at last be attended by Mistakes.

A Second LETTER on the Subject.

S I R,

THE Conversation you had with the *Foreigner*, who is charged with being a Deist, appears to me of great moment.

I am perfectly of your Opinion, that in spite of his Prejudices against the Christian Religion, he respects it in the main; and that if any one could shew it him such as it is, he would be obliged to make it reparation, and acknowledge that till then, he had known it only by its Phantom.

As the pretended Contradictions of Scripture, are the Phantoms that frighten him, it would be a great Point gained to clear them up; or rather, to make them disappear. I think the Book of *Letters concerning the State of Souls separated from their Bodies*, very proper for that purpose.

There the Author assigns *ambiguous Expressions*, which give a handle to those Contradictions, their proper Places. He demonstrates, that the *True* cannot depend on some equivocal Terms, that it ought to be established on *fixed Principles* and *immutable Truths*. On these *Principles* his whole System is grounded.

He shews us, *That the Idea of GOD must be the Basis of whatever can be called Religion*; that the Idea of the Deity, includes that of

the *Infinite Being*; that the Idea of the *Infinite Being*, supposes the *Infinity* of his *Attributes*; that the *Infinity* of his *Attributes*, supposes a *perfect Harmony* among them; that the Idea of *perfect Harmony*, overturns the vulgar Opinion, by which *Justice* is opposed to *Goodness*.

The Author shews that *Justice* is essentially no other than *perfect Equity*: that *Justice*, taken in this sense, perfectly agrees with *infinite Goodness*: that this *Goodness* requires that the way to Happiness be open to all free and intelligent Creatures: that *Equity* requires that each of those Creatures should be more or less happy, more or less miserable, according to the use they shall make of their Liberty: that the *Infinity* of *Justice* consists in entering into *infinite Proportions*, in regard to the different degrees of *Happiness* or *Misery*, according to the different degrees of the *Good* and *Evil*, which shall be found in each Creature: that the Idea of *perfect Equity* is incompatible with that of *Revenge*, and a *boundless Revenge* on *limited* Creatures: that if *Goodness* and *Justice* ought to concur to the same end, the latter must be the contrary of *Vengeance*. * That instead of keeping guilty
Creatures

* We may, however, still say, with the Gospel, that GOD will avenge his Elect. A Father revenges the bad treatment one of his Children may have received from his Brethren, by inflicting on them chastisements proportioned to their fault; but this sort of *Vengeance*, which is approved of by Justice and Goodness themselves, has no connection with that which should pronounce sentence of eternal Damnation.

Creatures in eternal Torment, it labours to secure them from such a state by the Pains it inflicts on them: that these ought to be *chastizing* and *correcting Pains*, fit for consuming *Evil*, and destroying it to the very *Root*: an Evil which of itself would render Man miserable, without supposing any other cause of his Torments.

On that foot, the employment of *Justice*, will be an employment of *Goodness*, an effect of *Mercy*, which is exercised on all Creatures, not excepting even the most culpable; and which, by Operations proportion'd to the *Evil* they have contracted more or less voluntarily, at last brings them back to their *Origin*.

This Idea of the *Infinity* and *Harmony* of the divine Attributes is so evident, so agreeable to the most plain and *simple Notions*, that we must admit it, as soon as it offers itself. Every man would find it within himself, if he had not industriously thrown a Cloud over it from his Infancy, and substituted in its place an opinion of divine Justice, which can be satisfied only by eternal Torments.

Whence do we take this Idea? From some ambiguous Terms of Scripture; those Terms must be made to stand for first Principles. Who doth not perceive that the Opinion of eternal Damnation serves as a Hinge to the most difficult Disputes and most knotty Controversies? Without this, the Infallibility of the Church would fall to the ground, as well as that famous Maxim, * which serves as a

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Bulwark

* No Salvation out of the Church.

Bulwark to its Votaries. *Predestination* and *Reprobation* would find no room in the world; the distinction of *Particularists* and *Universalists* would cease; all would be *Universalists*, in the properest sense of the Word; whereas those who now assume that fine appellation, are so only in a very limited and imperfect sense. If they admit the Ideas of *Impartiality* and *infinite Goodness* into their Idea of the Divinity, they rob him of the most essential of his Perfections, or at least set bounds to it. They suppose in GOD a *helpless Wisdom*, reduced to the necessity of abandoning his most perfect Work, and letting it perish eternally, for want of means to restore it. Thus likewise *Omnipotence* ceases to be such. GOD wishes the salvation of all Mankind; but cannot accomplish his design. What an Idea of Divinity is this! and what must *Universality* be, when established on such *Ideas*?

That of the *Particularists* is indeed less tolerable. To suppose an *Omnipotence*, which attains to its *End*; but whose *End* is reduced to the choice of a small number of Creatures for the enjoyment of Happiness, and leaves the bulk of Mankind in eternal Misery. To suppose that *infinite Goodness* and *Wisdom* assent to this *Decree*, a Decree founded on the free Will of a Being, who is absolute Master of the Creatures, which he took from nothing: This *Idea*, it must be confessed, is still more surprizing than the other. It cannot be formed without horror.

The

The Followers of those two Parties, who, in the whole compass of thirteen or fourteen ages, have not been able to solve the Difficulty, have established the opposite Opinions on the same *Principle*; that of *eternal Damnation*. Both sides have held this as undoubted: They have never thought of enquiring whether a *Principle*, whose Consequences are *contradictory*, must not be a *false Principle**. The Scripture says it in express Terms; that

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is

* It is really surprizing, that Men have not once thought of going back to the source of so many Contradictions. Build on a *simple, evident, incontestable* Principle, and the consequences will be entirely uniform. Build on a *false* Principle, the justest Arguments will produce the most irreconcilable Contradictions.

Let a *neutral* Person, who is not in possession of this key of a Restoration, hear two of the most able Divines dispute, one of them a *Particularist*, the other an *Universalist*; the more justly they reason, the more embarrassed he will be. He will find that each of them breaks in on some one of the divine Attributes: that they charge each other with that bold attempt, and that they have both reason for so doing. They might compose whole Volumes on this Article, without coming near one single Point, and that, as long as they build on the same Principle. What is this Principle? Is it *simple, evident, and incontestable*? Very far from it. It is a bare supposition, founded on expressions susceptible of different *Senses*. The *Choice* they have made of one *Sense* preferably to another, is what serves as a *Basis* to these Controversies. Ought this to surprise us? It is surprizing, however, that men have not sooner discovered the *False* of a Principle, the consequences of which are necessarily contradictory.

is sufficient; all enquiry would be superfluous.

But can the Expressions of Scripture stand for *first Principles*? At that rate, what must become of that number of Creatures, who are unacquainted with the Scripture? Must they be unprovided with *first Principles*? St. Paul, *Rom. ii.* might instruct us in this Point; who tells us, that those who have not a *written Law*, have a *spiritual Law written in their hearts*; and shall be judged by that *Law*. Without that *Law*, what could be the Grounds of their Condemnation?

Again, must even such as are in possession of written Revelation be destitute of the *spiritual Law*? This is what no man will venture to advance. If the expressions of Scripture ought to stand for *first Principles*, to what purpose is the *spiritual Law*? All use of it would be destroyed; the Scripture would be placed in its room. The Author of the *Letters* observes, however, that the Scripture itself refers us to that *immutable Law*; that it sends Man to it as a *superiour Tribunal*. O *House of Israel, are not my ways right*? Would GOD refer Men to a *false Rule*, for examining whether his *Ways* are *right* or not? And may we not conclude with the same Author, that a *Rule to which the Deity submits itself, ought to be perfectly right, the work of his own hand*?

This right Rule therefore must stand for a *first Principle*: it must serve as a *Measure* for

for distinguishing the *True*: ambiguous Expressions ought to depend on it. Bare Words shall no longer be a Rule of the *True*: the *True* shall determine the *sense of Words*. Such Expressions as are reconcileable to this Rule, shall be received in the *literal* sense: such as appear contrary to it, shall be esteemed enigmatical: they shall be ranked among those *obscure* things, which can make no abatement in the *Force* of the *Evidence*.

This is the measure the Author of the Letters employs for explaining his Subject. It is evident that thus all Difficulties are removed, and the pretended *Contradictions* in the Scripture-Language disappear. It is likewise observable, that the Author is not reduced to the necessity of departing from the Letter, or doing violence to it in order to establish his System: that it contains Expressions, both more numerous, and more positive, than those brought for the contrary Opinion.

If I am not out in my conjectures, the honest *Deist*, who has been long quarrelling with the Scripture, will be cured of his Prejudices by reading those *Letters*. He will there find a System of *Religion*, perfectly agreeable to his own Ideas of *sovereign Equity*.

In that point of view, the disorder and confusion, which appear in the Universe, are no longer surprizing. The disproportion, which Providence seems to make between intelligent Creatures, ceases to be a proof against it. We see beyond this life *Scenes* much
more

more considerable, where all will be compensated in the most exact proportion.

It is a mere Banter to talk of *infinite Proportions*, a *perfect Compensation*, as long as eternal Damnation is admitted. The Divines, who have used that Language without quitting their opinion, will not understand themselves. They have employ'd fine terms in justification of Providence, and to stop the mouths of Unbelievers. But those Gentlemen are not satisfied with them; they have observed that the Lot of infinite Bliss, opposed to that of eternal Despair, among Creatures of the same nature, would destroy all *Proportion*? How is it possible to find in it even the shadow of *Compensation*? In this, it may be replied, that the Wicked will have received their *good things* in this life, and shall have their *evil things* in the next.

But the Wicked have likewise *evil things* in this life; and though they be supposed in the most flourishing state imaginable in this World, what will be the consequence? Shall some few hours of false Happiness enter into comparison with eternal Torments? What an Idea of *Compensation* is this!

Ought we to be surprized, after this, if Men, who have any tolerably just way of thinking, cannot bear a Language, so manifestly contradictory: If they are prejudiced against a Book, which is made to speak in this manner, and which ought to be a *divine Book*? Should

Should I enlarge on this subject, I must necessarily repeat what the Author has already said on it *. Permit me, Sir, to refer our *Deist* to the *Letters*. You will much oblige me by letting me know what effect they have on him.

A L E T T E R to Mr. * * *.

*Being a Parallel between the LETTERS
and the DIALOGUES.*

IT would be difficult, Sir, to bestow the Prize on one of the Books, you mention, to the prejudice of the other, as I find them of different kinds; and consequently it is not easy to compare them. You are surprized that in your part of the World, the *Letters* have more Partisans than the *Dialogues*. I assure you, Sir, that all things rightly considered, I am not at all surprized at it.

The Author, or Authors of those two Works, though uniform as to the *Substance*, seem to me to have different *Ends* in view.

The

* See the twelfth and thirteenth *Letters*. The latter in particular contains solutions in justification of Providence, which are only mentioned here, and appear there at large.

The two following Pieces likewise afford us satisfactory Solutions.

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The Writer of the *Letters* has endeavoured to give a short sketch of the *universal Plan of the Deity, in regard to Mankind*. He rather views Religion from the *Designs* of GOD toward Men, than the *Disposition*, or, if you please, the *Indisposition* of Men in regard to GOD. He cannot indeed avoid mentioning the latter in several places; and grounds the necessity of *Purification* on the *Depravation* of man. But then he shews the *End* in which all those *rigorous ways* will terminate. That *End* is so worthy of GOD, and so advantageous to Man, that we are charm'd with it as soon as we have a glimpse of it. Besides, this Plan is so agreeable to the most *simple notion* of *infinite Goodness* and *perfect Equity*, that we cannot conceive how we could think otherwise.

Christians for many ages have not dared to consult those *simple notions*. They have imagined themselves obliged to silence them, in order, as they have been taught, to submit them to the Decisions of the Word of GOD; that is, to *Words*, which were made the *Rule of Things*, and to which they are at last become Slaves.

Here Man is restored to the liberty of thinking, and giving room to evidence. He is no longer obliged to admit of things contradictory, or imagine he does admit of them. The religion which is offered him, has no need of foreign authority for enforcing its reception.

ception. He finds the Principles of it engraved on the bottom of his own Heart.

The Mind of Man, formed for Truth, recoils at every thing that implies a contradiction: it is charmed with harmony and evidence: it must yield, when they appear. This, no doubt, is what engages the Reader's Judgment in favour of the *Letters*: Most men will remember they have frequently had the same thoughts, in spite of the *Strength* of *Prejudice*. How much are we pleased with an Author who explains those *Ideas* and *Sentiments*, we had already entertained, and which we dared not allow their full play?

The Author of the *Dialogues* is in a different Case: His design was not so much to describe the universal Plan of Providence, by displaying the *Scenes* of the *Life to come*, as to *unveil* Man, shew him his *False*, and how little he is disposed to enter into the views of the Deity.

What satisfaction soever may be found in discovering the ways of divine *Wisdom* and *Justice*, as represented in the *Letters*; that discovery would be of little use, if we mistook ourselves; we should thereby be out of a condition of performing what was the design of our Creation. While we falsely imagined ourselves in the element of the *True*, we should be strengthened in the *False*, and in *Illusion*. Thus likewise we should prepare for ourselves the strangest *Misreckoning* at our departure out of this life. It

It would therefore be a good office, while there is time, to assist Men in beginning, in this life, a *Work*, which sooner or later must be performed. This *Work* is the *study of themselves*, the distinct view of their real *Motives*; a view to be gained only by an attention to the dictates of *Sentiment*, and a *Flexibility* to the Impressions of Truth. This the Author of the *Dialogues* seems to aim at, through his whole Book; and if we follow him somewhat closely, we may perceive, he doth not shoot much short of his mark, not even in the digressions, which seem most foreign to the Purpose.

Several have bestowed the Prize on the *Letters*, for this reason only; because they are not loaded with such digressions: because the whole is carried on in a continued series; in a word, because we see at the first glance what the Author would be at. May not the reason for this different *Form*, be found in the very *Nature* of the things, which each of those Authors undertakes to explain?

The Writer of the *Letters* has given us a compendious *Description* of the ways of GOD: The Writer of the *Dialogues* applies himself particularly to an account of the *ways of Men*.

The ways of GOD, consider'd in the *whole*, are *upright*, *luminous*, and full of *Harmony*, in all their parts: Those of Man are *crooked*, *dark*, and full of *Contradictions*.

Hence

Hence it may be conceived, that it is easy for a man who has any key to the former, to reduce them to a regularly connected *System*; and exclude whatever is unworthy of so noble a subject, so compleat a plan.

But how was it possible to reduce to a *System* the *False*, the *By-ways*, and *voluntary Illusions* deeply rooted in man? Though it were possible, I doubt whether it might be expedient to attempt it. A piece so deformed, fully seen at the first glance, would become useless to men, by the aversion they would immediately conceive to it. If it be a good office to display their *False* to their view, it must be done imperceptibly, and by degrees, in such a manner as may give them an opportunity of being sensible of it themselves, and willing to own it.

Man is jealous of his *Liberty*. He rejects what you would convince him of in quality of *Doctor* or *Moralist*; but when he is witness of the ingenuous confession of one like himself, he is convinced by a secret sentiment, without perceiving that he himself is in the case. He cannot resist the force of Truth, the proofs of which he finds within himself.

These perhaps were the Author's reasons for giving his work so *original* a Form instead of making it a *regular Treatise*.

If, as it has been observed, the serious Pieces interspersed through the same Book, are penned in a more noble style, than the
familiar

familiar Discourses, the reason for this difference is easily assign'd *. The serious pieces are of a kind suitable enough to that of the *Letters*: They are so many *short draughts of the ways by which Truth manifests itself to man*. Here every thing ought to be noble and worthy of the subject. Here the ironical strain would be unseasonable: In the familiar Discourses, it is perfectly in its place: the *False* does not deserve to be attacked gravely; it is most effectually exposed, when imitated or ridiculed.

This, I confess, may be more offensive to such as shall see themselves in the picture whether they will or not. And who knows but this may be the secret cause why some persons are displeased at the too frequent digressions which interrupt the thread of the Discourse? † In reality, others have considered them in a different light: this pretended Irregularity seems to them not only a beauty, but even an opportunity for unfolding *Truths*.

You

* It would be ridiculous to write familiar Discourses in the same style with metaphysical Dissertations. All we expect in the former is that they be natural, easy and unaffected; and that each Character be supported. It was once a commendation to say *a Man spoke like a Book*. Now it is a ridicule; and Men even value themselves on *writing as they speak*. Much more then, ought we to speak as we speak in familiar Discourse, especially in a Walk.

† Digressions are so natural in Conversation, that they cannot be banished from thence, without giving it an air of Restraint and Pedantry, insupportable to Persons of a certain taste.

You will now allow, Sir, that it is no easy matter to judge to which of those two works it is proper to give the *Prize*: and, that if some, without hesitation, bestow it on the *Letters*; they do not perhaps thoroughly enquire into the Cause of the Judgment they pronounce.

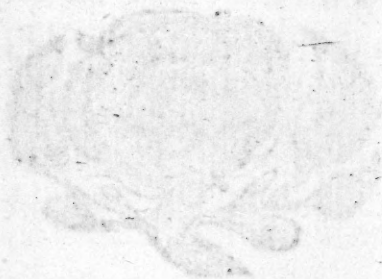
For my part, I should be tempted to think that even the *Difference* between these *two Works*, might concur to form something *complete* in the whole.



T H E

You will now show, Sir, that it is necessary
 to judge to which of these two words
 it is proper to give the Tacton, and that it
 is without exception, to show it on the
 Tacton, for the not party is thoroughly con-
 sidered in the Tacton of the Judgment they

are to give. I have been obliged to think
 that, even in the Tacton, there are these two
 Tacton, which cannot be taken touching
 Tacton in the whole.



THE
S E Q U E L
O F T H E
F O U R T E E N L E T T E R S ;

Concerning the S T A T E of S O U L S
separated from their B O D I E S.

B E I N G

An A N S W E R to a Book, Entitled,
An E N Q U I R Y into O R I G E N I S M,

By Mr. Professor R——

THE
SEQUEL

OF THE

FOURTEEN LETTERS;

Concerning the STATE of SOULS
Separated from their BODIES.

BEING

An Answer to a Book, Entitled,

An Enquiry into ORIGINISM.

By Mr. Thomas A. ———

ADVERTISEMENT

Concerning the following LETTERS.

IT appears from the first of these Letters, that there was at first no design of making a formal Reply. Several who have read the Book written by Mr. Professor R. have observed that it doth not weaken the Foundation of the System of a *Restoration*.

In reality, the strongest blow that Gentleman gives it, has no tendency to shew the *False* of it. He begins with bewailing the iniquity of the times, in which men dare publish a Doctrine calculated for corrupting *Morals*, for seducing the World, and giving a free course to all kinds of disorders. He proves this by Examples.

He supposes two Men, a Miser and a Courtier; “ one of them resolved to amass large
“ Sums at any rate: the other as violently
“ bent on making his way to Honours. Nei-
“ ther of them can gain his End without be-
“ ing guilty of Injustice, and Perfidy. The
“ prospect of eternal Torments would be
“ useful in stopping their pursuits. Remove
“ this restraint, be assured, says Mr. R.
“ they would immediately run headlong into
“ all Crimes necessary for succeeding in their
“ Designs. *Page 25.*

I leave it to any one's judgment whether these examples are good proofs in the Case.

I should imagine, on that foot, that Perfidy, Violence, and all sorts of Disorders which disturb Society, must be banished, wherever the opinion of a miserable Eternity is received *. I should imagine, for the same reason, that if there be a corner of the World, where this *Restraint*, this motive to the fear of GOD, is taken away, there must we find that Disorder, that *horrible Confusion*, mentioned by Mr. Professor. I should farther imagine that, if there are any particular men scatter'd through different Countries, who have thrown off this so powerful restraint, such men must be distinguishable by the Irregularity of their Morals.

I would fain know, however, what is the reason, why we see so many Gentlemen of the black Robe, that formidable Body, called Ministers of *Justice*, that endless train of *Proceedings*, that multitude of men, who subsist only on the Injustice done by one private person to another; I would fain know, I say, why we see these in Countries where this restraint is generally admitted. How shall we account for this?

We have here a *Miser*, and a *Courtier*, whose Injustice and Perfidy have here been laid open by means of this *Body of Justice*. Were these two men become *Origenists*? Had they been seduced by that *deceitful Language*, which

* Every one sees, that this Expression is somewhat extravagant; but it is suitable to Mr. Professor's Supposition.

which Mr. R compares to that of the Devil? By no means. They were very zealous for all the points of the Religion of their Ancestors; eternal Damnation being one Article of it, they had no thoughts of renouncing it.

I set this Example in opposition to that advanced by Mr. R and desire the Paradox may be explain'd.

If Mr. Professor answers, that Examples, founded on Suppositions are not *conclusive*, I grant it. But then he must likewise allow that the Examples by him proposed are not *conclusive*; and that the whole first Chapter, which proceeds on such Suppositions, is not more *conclusive*.

It has been matter of surprize, that he should begin his confutation in this manner. It was naturally expected, he should first have examined whether the System of the *Restoration* is well or ill grounded: That after this enquiry, he should have set forth the consequences which necessarily result from it. But he takes a contrary method. He begins with the *Consequences*; * Consequences, which he founds on the Example here produced, and other

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equi-

* There are indeed some Opinions, the Principles of which are sufficiently overthrown by a bare Enumeration of the Consequences; but then the Consequences must be evident and unavoidable. In this case, the matter is quite contrary: Mr. R supposes Consequences, which are denied; and which are so far from being inevitable, that they are proved false by the Event.

equivalent Suppositions. From them he concludes that those Consequences are pernicious: that they are calculated only for throwing men into a false Security and Licentiousness.

This way of treating a Subject is, however, of some use in the case before us. The Reader, who, at the first glance, sees the pernicious effects, which the doctrine of a *Restoration* must necessarily produce, the *horrible Confusion* which would proceed from it, begins to be terrified.—He is already more than convinced of the falshood of this Doctrine: he has no need to know any more of it, or read the remainder of the book; or, in short, if he does read it, it is in this first point of view, which he carries with him to the end, and which helps him to discover Demonstrations in every Page of the same Book.

It is not answered in the same manner. The examination of the Consequences, which must flow from either System, is reserved to the Conclusion.

First, It is enquired, whether the System of a *Restoration* is grounded on *Truth*, on *weighty Reasons* or on bare *Conjectures*, as Mr. R pretends.

Secondly, It is enquired whether the Scripture *authorizes*, or *opposes* this System. In this enquiry, a Rule is employ'd, which Mr. R himself proposes. The Texts of Scripture which seem either *for* or *against* it,
are

are revived. Hence it appears that the Expressions on both sides are almost equivalent; and that the Scale still hangs even.

Thirdly, It is enquired whether any thing can be found that may give *weight* to the *Expressions*: whether there are not some *Truths*, which are *independent* on *Terms*, and may thus help us to the sense of them.

The fourth enquiry is, what those *Truths* may be: and whether all men are obliged to receive them. The last Question is resolved in the *affirmative*. This *Measure* therefore is used for explaining the sense of such expressions as seem contradictory.

Lastly, The Consequences resulting from this System, are examined. It is demonstrated, that the Opinion of a *miserable Eternity* is better calculated for throwing men into Remissness, than that of a *Restoration*.

All that remains is to know whether this be well demonstrated or not. The Reader must judge of that.

This being done, an Answer is given to an Objection, taken out of the Professor's Treatises, viz. *That it is not our business to set bounds to the divine Justice, or determine what would be just or unjust in GOD: that we ought to lay our Finger on our Mouth, &c.* This is the Subject of the fourth Letter, and at the same time concludes the Answer to the Professor's Book.

The Reader will find other Letters after that, which bear no relation to this Answer, though written on Subjects but little different.

He will observe that several parts of Mr. Professor's Treatise are passed by without any direct Answers. The Author of the *Letters* proposed only to defend the System of a *Restoration*; for which reason, he has attempted only to parry the *Blows* levelled at it. No notice is taken of such as are struck in the air, or fall short of the mark. Insisting on them would have been attacking Mr. R which was not the design of these Letters.

Here it will be proper to give an example of what I am saying, otherwise it may be thought that this is only an Evasion, for avoiding an Answer to the whole.

" The Letter-Writer, says Mr. R
 " takes his first Proof from the Incarnation
 " of JESUS CHRIST; He thinks it of
 " great force, if ever so little attended to. By
 " that he enobles all human Nature, and becomes
 " the Brother of all Men. This Idea alone
 " might privilege us to presume that not one
 " of those Men, whose Nature the Son of GOD
 " has assumed, will perish eternally." To
 " which Mr. R answers thus: " For
 " my part, I think this Reason very weak.
 " JESUS CHRIST was made Man: He
 " is become the Brother of all Men; there-
 " fore he will save them all. Were not the
 " Levites Brethren to the Children of Israel;
 and

“ and yet, when, after the affair of the golden Calf, *Exod. xxxii. 26, 28. Moses* cried at the door of the Camp, *Who is on the Lord's side? let him come to me?* they left their idolatrous Brethren, and went to him; and when he had commanded them, in the name of God, to take their Swords, go through the Camp, and kill each man his Brother, his Friend and his Neighbour, they immediately set out, executed his orders without mercy, and killed three thousand Men. An Action very extraordinary, and mysterious*, which shews that JESUS CHRIST, the true High-Priest of the World, will likewise have a Sword for punishing such of his unworthy Brethren with death, as dishonour their heavenly Father by their Sins.”

Let the Reader judge whether this Article has passed unobserved for want of a proper answer, and whether this, and others of the same sort, are not what we call *Blows in the air*. I could produce others of the like nature, were I not afraid of swelling this *Advertisement*, by copying whole Pages. I shall confine myself to one more.

“ We know and teach, says Mr. R. . . . , as well as these Gentlemen, that in GOD

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is

* This Action doth not make it appear that JESUS CHRIST must punish his Brethren with eternal Death. Beside that an Action of the *Lewites* is no Rule for his Conduct; the Death they inflicted on their Brethren and eternal Damnation are two different things.

“ is neither Anger, Fury, or any Passion like
 “ those of Men ; but then we say that *Justice*
 “ is in GOD a constant Will of rendering
 “ every one his due ; *Good* to him who does
 “ Good ; *Evil* to him who does Evil.

Is this to be reckon'd a *Stroke in the air* ?
 That would be saying too little. It falls directly on the person who strikes. It proves exactly what the *Letters* lay down concerning *perfect Equity*, which proportions the *Punishment* to the *Crime*. I do not find in it the least trace of eternal Misery.

The Reader will observe others, that prove no more than this ; and that no injury is done to the Author, by declining the consideration of them.

I come now to say one word to the Preface. On reading it a man would not suspect that Mr. R designed to confute one single work ; he seems to attack several Authors at once ; one would not imagine his aim directed at the Book of *Letters*, till he tells us so.

“ It is my opinion, says he, that we ought
 “ to let these zealous Doctors see that we
 “ know, better than they do, how to practise
 “ the Rules of the Gospel-Morality : that
 “ we know how to render *Good* for *Evil*,
 “ *Blessing* for *Cursing*, and answer those, who
 “ injure us with *Moderation*. I am satisfied
 “ I have done so in this piece. Page 11.

Any one who reads this, without perusing the Book of *Letters*, will be full of Indignation
 against

against an Author who should give occasion to such a return. Nor would he have less reason to admire the *Moderation* of Mr. R who answers these *Invectives* only with *Blessings*. To confirm him in this, he need only confront the two works one with the other.

The Article preceeding that last extracted, doth not give so favourable an Idea of this *Moderation*. It is grounded on a *Supposition*; and it doth not appear at whom it is levelled.

“ Men, says Mr. R who though
 “ mere upstarts, are capable of insulting and
 “ abusing their Antagonists in words, would
 “ be very capable of making them feel the
 “ violence of their Choler by effects, if they
 “ had them in their power; especially as
 “ they already look on them with a sovereign
 “ contempt, as Wretches almost destined to be
 “ Victims of the Devil.” * Has this any
 relation to the work which Mr. R undertakes to confute?

Let us put a more favourable Construction on Mr. Professor's Intentions. He does not mean, that the Letters contain foul Language, or *Invectives* †. A Man must be a great Ar-

H 5 tist

* Has a work whose visible Characteristic is universal Benevolence for all Mankind, any Connexion with the sovereign Contempt, which Mr. R supposes?

† Mr. R— elsewhere says, “ He is obliged in Justice to the Author of the *Letters*, to own, that he shews a great deal of *Moderation*.” This Testimony, had it been placed here, might have served as a Lenitive. The Reader would then have understood, that such *Suppositions* or *Accusations* do not in the least affect the Author.

tist to find any thing of that nature in them. He certainly had some other Writers in view, while he was writing his Preface. It is surprising he should add, that *his Answer is penned with Moderation.*

He probably considers all who do not admit of the Doctrine of a miserable Eternity, as a Body so closely united, that each Member of it is answerable for what the rest of them have published *.

When Mr. R—— is informed that it is he that brought our Author acquainted with † the Works he mentions; Works which till then he had never heard speak of; he will be sensible, that these two are so many *Blows in the Air.*

An ANSWER to Mr. R----'s Preliminary Reflections.

I Have observed an Article, which serves as an *Exordium* to the *Enquiry into Origenism*; on which it may not be amiss to say a word or two.

Mr. R—— sets out with reminding his Readers of the Menace of Death pronounced by GOD to *Adam* and *Eve*, if they should eat

* This is just as if a Writer, who doth not hold the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, ought to be answerable for whatever may be written by others, who reject that Article.

† The Works of Dr. *Petersein*, and other *German* and *English* Writers,

eat of the forbidden Fruit; and the Lye given him by the Devil, when he said, *You shall not surely die.* page 16. He afterwards compares the Doctrine of a *Restoration* to this diabolical Language: "Had not I reason to say, concludes he, that the Doctrine of those Gentlemen very much resembles the seducing Language of the Devil, *you shall not surely die?*" page 48.

Nothing could give more weight to Mr. Professor's Confutation, than this Comparison. It might produce all the Prejudice he could wish against the Doctrine of a *Restoration*. But the misfortune is, that it is not just.

You shall not surely die; that is, in the Case in question, *No ill shall befall you*. Doth this affect the Author of the Letters? This Question is sufficiently answered, by the Description he gives us of *Hell*, in his eleventh Letter.

But says Mr. R—— *You suppose those Torments will have an end*. What a strange Supposition is this!

Tell a Man, who is passionately fond of Gain, that if he attains his End by Acts of *Injustice*, he shall be tortured with the *Stone*, or the *Rack*; a hundred Years; is this telling him, *No ill shall befall him?*

But says Mr. R—— "If Men were persuaded, that, after some time of suffering, they shall be saved, &c." page 23. The

Term *some time* is *indefinite*. In the common way of speaking, it stands for a small number of Years. Doth the Author of the Letters speak of *Hell* under that Idea? Doth he determine the Number? After a Description of that *Hell*, he concludes thus:

“ In short, it may even be considered as
 “ an eternal Fire, or an Eternity of Punish-
 “ ments, in regard to what the Damned will
 “ undoubtedly feel in it; for we have abun-
 “ dant reason to believe, that, since the
 “ Scripture represents the Duration of their
 “ Pains as an Eternity, that Duration will
 “ appear such to them, not only by the num-
 “ ber of Years and Ages, which it will swal-
 “ low up, but also because the least Portion
 “ of Time will appear to them an Eternity.”
 Letter XI.

Doth this Language bear much Resemblance to that with which Mr. R ——— compares it, *You shall not surely die?*

Perhaps Mr. R ——— had not observed this Passage in the *Letters*; and the Idea of a *Hell*, which will have an end, presented to his Mind only a small number of Years. I should have supposed this, had not he himself cleared up the Doubt. He explains himself positively on what he understands by the Words, *some time*. The Term, in regard of some, signifies a *thousand* Years, in regard to others, *two thousand, seven thousand, or fifty thousand* Years. page 115. This is his Idea of that
Hell,

Hell, which tends to lull Men into Security.

The Passage quoted from the *Letters*, mentions only *some Ages*; and *burning some Ages*, did not seem to the Author a small Matter.

Mr. R ——— however is not terrified at all this; he begins* with *thousands* of Years, and goes on to *fifty thousand*. Is *burning* fifty thousand Years any thing, when compared to *Eternity*? As soon as you suppose an *End* to the *Torments*, you destroy all *Fear*; you lull Men to sleep by that seducing Assurance, *You shall not surely die*.

The Author the *Letters*, considering the State of those who had rebelled before the Time of *Noah*, and who, according to *St. Peter*, were even in his days detained in the infernal Prison, thought that Idea so terrible, that when he mentioned the same Passage, he dared not venture on this Remark: so that, whenever he speaks of *Hell*, he doth meddle with its *Duration*.

But, in short, since Mr. R ——— is of opinion, that the number of *fifty thousand* Years does not come up to the Idea of the Punishment which the Damned deserve; if, in order to engage him to allow an *End* of them, it be necessary to grant him a much longer Term, we would do it, without the least hesitation. Instead of fifty thousand, then,

* In reality, when a Man is once accustomed to view an Eternity without End, he must reckon fifty thousand Years but a small matter.

then, he may put a hundred thousand, two hundred thousand; if that is not sufficient, let him make them up four hundred thousand, a *Million*; in fine, he may double the Number, provided he does but allow an *End*, we will grant him what Number he pleases; at least, if we must necessarily chuse between that *Number* and *Duration without End*.

Mr. R— having proved, that the Doctrine of a *Restoration* may do much harm, contents himself with calling it an *useless* and *curious Question*; * which may very well be let alone. For this he appeals to the Author of the Letters.

“ Once more, *says he*, this is a Question
 “ of more Curiosity than real Use. For this
 “ I appeal to the Author of the *Letters* him-
 “ self, who very well observes in his Preface,
 “ that *Questions of mere Curiosity have no*
 “ *Tendency: they are of no use, either in Spe-*
 “ *culation*

* This now is the last shift for not admitting a Truth too evident. Let us not meddle with it; it is a curious Question, which we are under no necessity of enquiring into or determining. This being supposed, the Partisans of a *miserable Eternity* would be obliged to desist; for, in short, the Question is not less curious on the Affirmative, than on the Negative Side. The Affirmative is rather more bold; and it is well known, that he who affirms, ought to have more Proofs than he who denies. It is evident therefore, that Mr. R——’s Reproach must fall on those who have, for so many Ages, affirmed the Eternity of *Hell*.

If it be objected, that the Affirmative is the same in regard to the *Restoration*; I answer, that there is a
 wide

“ culation or Practice. Far from giving any
“ Light into the Obscurities or seeming Con-
“ traditions in Religion, they produce new
“ ones.” page 31.

Doth Mr. R—— imagine, that the Author of the *Letters* has given the character of what he calls *curious Questions*, in order to conclude that of the *Restoration* one of that kind? It is extremely probable that he designed the quite contrary, as is evident from the Words immediately following those quoted by Mr. R——.

“ It might here be said, that the Truths
“ contained in these *Letters*, are of use both
“ in Theory and Practice, were it not more
“ proper to leave that to the Reader’s own
“ Judgment.”

The Author supposed he had established it in his sixth, thirteenth, and fourteenth *Letters*;

wide difference between affirming, that a thing will return to its former Condition, and affirming, that it will be eternally in a violent State, for which it was not created.

The *Restoration* supposes nothing new, nothing foreign to the Nature of either God or Man; whereas Misery without End is equally foreign to both, and directly contrary to the Design of the Creator. Even when God inflicts Punishment in this World, he calls it his *strange Work*, his *strange Act*. Isaiah xxviii. 21. Let any one judge now on which side the Affirmative is most bold; on theirs who suppose this *strange Work* will have an end, or on theirs who maintain it will never cease.

184 *A Letter concerning the Book,*

ters; * and every Reader, who has Eyes, may judge whether he has done this by good Proofs or not. Mr. R——, however, appeals to the Author himself, on this head.

Mr. Professor's Conclusion would have had more weight, if it had been preceded by an *exact* † *Confutation* of the Letters last mentioned.

*A LETTER concerning the
Book entitled, An Enquiry into
Origenism.*

S I R,

I Have read the little Treatise which you was pleased to send me, and lent it to the Author of the fourteen Letters. As soon as I receive his Answer, I will communicate it to you.

You

* It is demonstrated in those three Letters, that the Doctrine of a *Resurrection* justifies the Conduct of Providence; that it shews the Harmony of the Divine Attributes; that it clears up the Obscurities and seeming Contradictions in Religion; that it puts an end to the Differences among Divines; that it includes stronger and more efficacious Motives for rendering Men virtuous, than the contrary System. The contrary of this ought to be proved, before it is called a *curious Question*.

† When an Author designs to conclude against a Doctrine, which he finds established by Proofs, whether such Proofs are substantial or not, he is always obliged to overthrow them, before he draws his Conclusion. If this is not done, he runs the hazard of concluding alone.

You ask me, Sir, Whether this piece of Criticism is not strong enough to efface the Impression those Letters had made on me. Not entirely; for I think Mr. R—— has not yet shook the Principles of the Work which he undertakes to confute. He has certainly reserved his best Proofs for the second Volume, which he gives us hopes to expect; where he will follow his Author step by step, and pursue him into his last Retrenchments. He will be the more strongly moved to the Execution of that Design, as a second Edition of the *fourteen Letters* is lately published, with the Addition of *Notes*, and some other new Pieces, which may deserve a Confutation.

I think that, if Mr. R—— was disposed to make short work of the matter, and would confine himself to the Overthrow of the Principles laid down in these new Dissertations, he would bring the whole Work to the ground, by that single Stroke. Among these new Pieces, I reckon an additional Letter concerning a *Deist*, which Mr. R—— has seen, but not confuted. It contains a sort of *Analysis* of the whole System, and lays down the Idea of GOD, as the Basis of all Religion.

I am so easily disabused, that when I see the Chain or Connection, which makes the whole Strength of that Piece, entirely overthrown, I shall require no farther Confutation, but look on the Author as vanquished. On that foot, Mr. R—— will gain the Victory at

a small Expence; and I think it would not be improper to propose that Expedient to him.

LETTER I. *from the Author
of the fourteen Letters, concern-
ing a Book entitled, An Enqui-
ry into Origenism.*

S I R,

YOU make me a Proposal in Mr. N—'s Name, of answering the Critic on the fourteen *Letters*. Should I undertake that Task, I ought to begin with returning the Civilities shown by Mr. R—— to an anonymous Author, whom he is under no manner of Obligation to treat so tenderly. But, as those obliging Expressions ought to give me room to doubt of their being directed to me, I think I ought to decline the said Return. Besides, I think Mr. R—— doth not by his Book afford sufficient Matter for an Answer in form; since he has attacked only the Surface of the Work, and not attempted to sap the Foundation of it*.

He does indeed set out with rendering the whole

* The System of a *Restoration* is founded on *immutable Truths*; to which Mr. R—— opposes only some *Expressions* of Scripture. In return, *Expressions* not less formal are objected to him. Mr. R—— is therefore still obliged to prove a *miserable Eternity* by *immutable Truths*, more evident than those on which the *Restoration* is established.

whole System suspected, by charging it with *Origenism*; and, which is more, with favouring *Pietism*. This is sufficient for throwing a Mist over the most palpable Truths. At least it has its effect on the Vulgar; it is a compendious way of discrediting a Work, and will pass on great numbers of Readers for a Demonstration. The *Roman Catholick* Doctors are sensible of the effect the Term *Heretic* produces on the Minds of Men. Nor has that of *Pietist* less force with the generality of Protestants?

One of the most singular Passages in the Book under consideration, is this:

“ I perceive, *says our Author*, that he here “ and there copies Dr. *Petersein*, word for “ word.” In return to this Remark, I can assure him, I never read one word of that Gentleman’s Writings.

I say the same in regard to the *English* Author, who, as Mr. R——— tells his Readers, has written a Treatise on this Subject, under the Title of *The New Gospel, from which the Origenists have taken the Doctrine of the Restoration.* page 26. I am obliged to our Author for this Information.

The first Edition of the Letters was in the Press, when I heard of a Piece written by Dr. *Burnet* *, in favour of a *Restoration*. I am

Note of the Translator.

* In the Original I find a Note, which tells us this was a Son of the famous *Burnet*, Bishop of *Salisbury*, whose Book was printed in 1731. Here is a double Mistake.

am surprized it has escaped Mr. Professor's knowledge. Here would be a new Adversary for him to engage, and one worthy of his Pen. But it happens unluckily, that the Epithet of *Pietist* would be of no service to him, against that Gentleman. He speaks with an Assurance which would startle Mr. R——; *Be assured*, says he, *that the Time will come; when the Doctrine of eternal Torments will not be less odious than that of Transubstantiation is at present among the Protestants.*

I know not, says the same Writer, *how the Doctrine of eternal Torments becomes so agreeable to certain severe and cruel Divines, who will not even bear that this Point should be examined.* Ibid.

What do you think, Sir, of Mr. Professor's Discourse on the Novelty of this Opinion?

“ If, *says he*, the universal Church could
“ subsist without this Belief for above fifteen
“ Centuries, might it not do so after that
“ time?” page 33. “ I should think, *says*
“ *he in another place*, that the *Origenists* ought
“ to shew a Respect for the Judgment of
“ the universal Church.” page 32.

This

Mistake. The Book is intituled, *De Statu Mortuorum & Resurgentium*; and was penned by Dr. Thomas Burnet of the Charter-house. It was printed many Years before the Time here specified; but little known in the World till it was translated by Mr. Earbury, with Notes in opposition to the Doctrine of it. But few Copies of it were to be found; and it appears from the Preface, that the Author never designed it should come into many hands.

This Language sounds something like Infallibility, and is more suitable to the Principles of a *Roman Catholick*, than to those of Protestants. What will be the Consequence? That when Evidence presents itself to the Mind, before we acquiesce, we ought to enquire what the universal Church has pronounced.

Mr. N—— will not perhaps own, that the Criticism on the fourteen *Letters*, has not shaken the Principles of them. I could easily demonstrate the Matter to his Satisfaction.

In those Letters, *immutable Truths* are laid down, as the Rule by which we may discover the Sense of the obscure, figurative, and ambiguous Expressions, with which the Scripture abounds. To this it is added, that when we meet with *Contradictions*, those Expressions only are to be taken *literally*, which agree with such *Truths*. An Enquiry is then made, whether the Idea we entertain of the *Divine Goodness, Wisdom, and even Justice*, can be compatible with the Idea of an Eternal Damnation. This is what Mr. R—— ought to have proved.

He should have shewn that infinite *Goodness* can, without contradicting itself, consent to the Eternal Torments of an Infinity of Creatures: that Sovereign *Justice* requires it: and that in so doing it agrees with *Goodness*. Had he done this, he wou'd have begun to shake the whole System. Let us now see, how he gets clear of the matter.

“ The Author of the Letters, says Mr.
“ R——

“ R—— undertakes to prove that the *Non-*
 “ *Eternity* of Hell is grounded on those im-
 “ mutable Truths, which are the Basis of all
 “ Religion. He draws his Argument from
 “ the *Wisdom, Justice and Goodness* of GOD.
 “ Excellent Logic! Therefore the Torments
 “ of Hell will not be Eternal*.”

This now is a compendious way of confuting an Argument. I leave the Reader to judge whether the following Pages contain any thing more solid.

“ The Author of the Letters, says Mr.
 “ R—— finishes his Reflections with this
 “ pathetic Exclamation: *Can it be conceived*
 “ *that the Justice of GOD condemns Millions*
 “ *of Creatures, form'd after his own Image,*
 “ *to horrible Misery and that for ever? † What*
 “ *is more unjust, and more contrary to the de-*
 “ *sign of the Creator, than that an Infinity of*
 “ *Creatures should hate him for ever? I repeat*
 “ *it*

* Nothing is more proper for obscuring a Truth, than making the Conclusion immediately follow a Proposition which is not explained. This however, is of a Nature so evident, that it may even bear this Irregularity. Let us confront this Logic with that of Mr. R——.

GOD is *wise, just and good*; therefore the Torments of the Damned *will not be Eternal*. — GOD is *wise, just and good*; therefore the Torments of the Damned *will be Eternal*. I desire to know which concludes best.

† He has suppressed the following Period. *But why do I say, to horrible Misery? We ought to add, to a Hatred of GOD, to Rage, to Despair, to Blasphemy for all Eternity. May it not be said, on the contrary, that the chief Employment of this Sovereign Justice, is to render just what is unjust, and make strait what is crooked? What is more unjust, &c.*

“ it once more ; Can Sovereign Justice will In-
 “ justice, or permit it to subsist through all E-
 “ ternity ?”

This Interrogatory is somewhat strong, and therefore Mr. R——, though he had several things to say on that Head, suppresses them, to make short.

“ I shall content myself at present, says he,
 “ with saying, I should not care to speak in
 “ so high a strain.— When we are talking
 “ of the adorable Majesty of the great GOD,
 “ is it the Business of poor Mortals like us,
 “ to pretend to set bounds to the * Rights
 “ of the supreme Justice of the Judge of the
 “ whole Earth ?” Page 71.

If this is not entirely satisfactory, it is at least a way for getting out of a scrape.

Soon after Mr. R—— meets with the solution, which he did not see at first.

“ If the Justice of GOD, adds he, did not
 “ allow him to punish the Wicked with Eter-
 “ nal Torments, wou’d his Wisdom have al-
 “ low’d him to threaten them with them ?”

This Argument wou’d admit of no Reply, did it not suppose the very thing in dispute†.

Mr.

* Unless by the Term *Justice*, Mr. R—— means *Revenge*, the Expression of setting bounds to Justice is improper. We are speaking of Revenge without bounds. See what is said on that Subject in the third Letter, *viz.* that the Infinity of Justice consists not in punishing *ad infinitum*, but in being infinitely equitable.

† The Question, is whether the Terms *Eternity*, and *for ever*, ought always to signify a Duration without End?

Mr. R—— wou'd have told us, this in the Schools is called beginning the question.

But now we are speaking of the *Schools*, what do you think, Sir, of the manner, in which Mr. R—— ridicules the Argument brought for reconciling the *Particularists* and *Universalists*?

“ The Author of the Letters, according
“ to him, has borrow'd it from Dr. *Petersein*,
“ (whom he never read) and it is a matter
“ of just surprize that that Doctor, who was a
“ Man of Letters, should fall into a way of
“ Reasoning so grossly faulty.” Page 75.

Mr. R——, before he produces the Theses or Arguments which reconcile the difference of the Divines, makes this Remark, *This is admirable, but is it equally solid? Hear what follows, and judge for yourself.* One wou'd expect he is going to demonstrate the *False* of it. No such matter. He falls foul on the form, and supposes somewhat ridiculous in it, which others do not discover. *This*, says he, *without lying, is an admirable way of reasoning.* This is sufficient for dazzling the Reader, and dispensing with a Categorical Answer. *This, without lying, is an admirable way of clearing his hands of the Affair.*

Let us now see the *False* of this Argument, wherein consists the ridiculousness of it?

“ In this, says Mr. R——, that their Ad-
“ versaries will deny one or the other of the
“ Premises of their Syllogism. What do
“ they drive at? A *Particularist* will not ad-

“ mit the Minor, nor an *Universalist* the Major *; thus they are in a fine way toward being reconciled.” Page 74.

This now is the ridiculousness of the Argument; that among a thousand Persons, who shall read this Work, a certain Number, with the Appellation of Divines, will be determined to maintain their own particular System to the end. Each of them, being firmly resolved to make no Concessions one to the other, will deny either the *Major* or *Minor*; and consequently the Conclusion will be null. In this Case, I desire to know who will prove more ridiculous; he that aims at reconciling the Divines, or those very Divines, who are absolutely resolved never to agree?

It should be observed, that the Dispute is not here with one Adversary. No Divine is attacked apart, with a View of making him quit one Opinion, and embrace the contrary †. Nothing like this is intended. Each of them is allow'd his Thesis. All here design'd is to make them sensible that they are not incompatible, that one of the Parties is in the right, and the other not in the wrong ‖.

VOL. II.

I

But

* This is not certain; and the contrary is evident from Experience. All the Divines have not taken an Oath, to adhere so firmly to their Opinions, as Mr. R— supposes; there are some *Universalists*, who have made no difficulty of allowing the *Major*, without giving up the *Minor*.

† It is but too common a Practice in the Schools, to argue with this View only.

‖ For Example, *The Will of GOD is efficacious.*

GOD

But, says Mr. R——, in order to make what we call in the Schools an Argument *ad hominem*, the Person, against whom we dispute, ought to be convinced of the Principles of the Argument.

No doubt of it, when we dispute against Peter or John. To argue against such or such a particular Person, on Principles which he doth not admit, would be fighting with the Air. But the matter is quite otherwise in the present Case *; the Argument is not address'd to Divines *alone*, much less Divines of one Party *only*; but to every Man capable of distinguishing the *True* of the Principles of the whole Work; and consequently of admitting the Propositions which result from them.

Another Remark, which Mr. R—— has certainly not made, and which would have made the ridiculousness he sees, disappear, is, that there was no design of establishing the System of a *Restoration* on the different Opinions of Divines. It is founded on a more *invariable Basis*; as appears from the five first Letters. The Propositions already prov-
ed

GOD wills that all Men should be saved. Here now are two Propositions by no means incompatible, though they have been considered as such, for so many Ages.

* A Man, who proposes an Argument to any Reader indifferently, is well assured before-hand that all will not admit his Principles. It is sufficient for him, that he advances only such as are well-grounded, and such as every equitable and intelligent Reader must be oblig-
ed to allow.

ed for * reconciling the difference, which has subsisted so many Ages among Divines, are employ'd only in the *dernier resort*.

This is indeed a very bold Attempt, and such as never was thought of in the Schools. Mr. R—— therefore observes, that *the Glory of this Work was reserved for the Origenists*. They will certainly value themselves on it, even though they proceeded against all Scholastic Rules. They are persuaded, however, that had Mr. R—— sooner perceived the Design and Spirit of this Argument, he wou'd not have been at the trouble of taxing it with *wretched Sophistry*, and then concluding with, “ See what happens to Persons, wedded to “ some new Opinion. All Proofs † go “ down; and the weakest appear to them, “ as so many Demonstrations.”

Is there any farther necessity of undertaking to overthrow the pretended Relation, that Mr. R—— would find between the Syllogisms, which he puts into the mouth of a *Roman Catholic*, and those in question, Page 75, 76. The Invention is curious, as well as the Application he makes of it to the Author of the Letters, which deserves to be quoted in his own Words.

I 2

“ What

* For Example, *All those for whom JESUS CHRIST died, will partake of Salvation. JESUS CHRIST tasted Death for all Men.*

These two Propositions are proved in the first Part of the Letters.

† It has been shewn, that the different Theses of Divines, are not laid down in quality of essential Proofs.

“ What wou’d our Author think of a
 “ *Roman Catholic*, who should offer him such
 “ Syllogisms? I am satisfied he wou’d ad-
 “ vise him to purge his Brain with some Grains
 “ of *Hellebore* ; or at least wou’d not be able
 “ to forbear laughing in his face, and telling
 “ him, you take me for a Simpleton.”

It is surprizing that some, who imagine themselves equally well acquainted with the Rules of true Logic, do not break out into the same Exclamation. But the Sophistry of such Syllogisms has escaped their Penetration.

I perceive what I have said bears the Air of an Answer. I had at first no other View than that of satisfying Mr. N——, who thought the *Enquiry into Origenism* of some weight. This ought to be sufficient for disabusing him. But as he may complain that I leave several Articles still more essential behind, I believe they may furnish me with Matter for a second Letter.

L E T T E R II.

I Grant, Sir, the Article, in which Mr. R—— seems strongest against the *Non-Eternity* of Hell-Torments, is that in which he reviews all the Passages of Scripture, that speak of *Eternity*, *the Worm that never dies*, *the Fire which is never quenched*. This may appear to carry the utmost force to such as
 know

know the Scripture, more by *Words* than by *Things*.

This difficulty was obviated in the beginning of the first Letter, where it is observed that the Scripture abounds with *figurative*, *ambiguous*, and often with seemingly *contradictory* Expressions. Whence it is inferred, that all cannot be taken *literally*. It is acknowledged, however, that some Expressions must be understood literally, as others are to be understood with restriction. This being supposed, a Choice and Distinction must be made in the Sense given to such or such Expressions. This likewise is done in one of the Letters; where it is said, *that Words can never be the Rule of the True; but that the True ought to determine the Sense of Words: and that the True ought to be established on fixed Principles, on immutable Truths.* Letter concerning a Deist.

We must here remember, what was laid down in the first Letter concerning the grand Principles of *Eternal* and *Immutable* Truths, which are *independent* of *Expressions*, *Figures* and *Parables*, and which we find as it were engraved on the very *Substance* of our *Being*; to which the Scripture *bears Testimony*, but which *depend* not on the Scripture, because, were it possible for that Book to be lost, we should have no less Certainty of them. Of those Truths it has been said that *they are*

198 L E T T E R I I .

not become true by Revelation; but were revealed because they are true. Letter IX.

Mr. R—— does not pretend to prove the falshood of these Principles.

“ The Author of the Letters, says he, lays
“ down some Principles, which he judges ne-
“ cessary for a right Explanation of the Scrip-
“ ture. I cannot do better than imitate his
“ Example. A first Principle which I here
“ advance, and which the Author will allow
“ me, is, that there is no real Contradiction
“ in the Scripture.” Mr. R—— seems to
forget that this is one of the Principles * most
strongly established in the Letters.

“ Hence, continues he, I draw this Rule;
“ that when we meet with some Passages,
“ which seem to overthrow certain Truths,
“ proposed in a strong and decisive manner
“ in other Places, we are to give these Pas-
“ sages such a Sense, as doth not overthrow
“ those Truths.”

I receive this Rule to a certain Point; but
do not hold it to be infallible; that wou'd, at
most, be only making certain Expressions
yield to others more *strong* and *decisive*; *Words*
wou'd still be the Rule of the *True*.

Let us endeavour to make use of this Rule,
and see whither it will lead us.

Mr. R—— acknowledges, that the Scrip-
ture cannot be understood *literally* in an in-
finity

* *When the Scripture seems to contradict itself in some
Places, we are to take literally only what perfectly agrees
with the fundamental and incontestable Truths.* Letter I.

finity of places : that we must make some Expressions give way to others. Some are proposed to him which seem contradictory, and yet appear equally decisive.

On one hand, we have those of *Eternal Fire, for ever, always, unpardonable Sin, Impossibility of Repentance*. I here set down all the Terms which Mr. R—— quotes, and the Scripture can afford us on this Subject, the greatest Force of which consists in the *always, for ever, and Eternity*.

On the other hand, we propose the positive Declarations, that GOD *wills all Men should be saved* : that JESUS CHRIST *tasted Death for all Men* : that *he was raised up from the Earth, to draw all Men to him* : that GOD *doth not keep his Anger for ever* : that *he chideth not eternally, &c.* I pass by an infinity of the same kind, several of which are produced in the Letters.

I now ask Mr. R——, on which side the Expressions are most *decisive*. He will undoubtedly say, those which establish the Eternity of Hell. But, I ask him, why they appear so to him ? Whether the Words *Eternal* and *for ever*, are no where employed in Scripture, when speaking of things now ended*. He will be obliged to grant me this ; he has already done it in his Book.

“ It is true, says he, that the *Greek* and the
 “ *Hebrew* Words, which signify an *Age, E-*
I 4
“ *ternal,*

* St. Jude says, that *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* received the Punishment of *Everlasting Fire*, ver. 7.

“ *ternal, for ever*, sometimes stand for an *un-*
 “ *limited Time*, or only for a *long Duration*,
 “ or all the *Time* that a certain thing can
 “ last. But, then the same *Terms* frequently
 “ and most commonly signify *Eternity* pro-
 “ perly so called *.”

Very well. But can an Expression, which signifies sometimes one thing, and sometimes another, be *decisive*? It cannot be so in both Senses. We are therefore to determine in which of them it must be *decisive*. Once more, I ask Mr. R—— why he takes *for ever* in the † Sense of *Eternity*, properly so called.

Nor have I less right to ask him, why the innumerable formal Declarations of GOD's *Design* to save *all Men*, ought to give way to that of everlasting Fire. He will tell me, as he has said in his Book, it is because the Expression of *all Men* is often used for signifying *many*, or Persons of *all Sorts*. I grant it, but even supposing this, the words *Eternal* and *all Men* being ranked in the same Class, one of them cannot give place to the other, as Mr. R—— pretends. Here

* We every day repeat in our Creed, *I believe in Life Everlasting*. The Compilers certainly forgot to add, *I believe in Death Everlasting*. This Omission may, at least, convince us, that they did not look on that Article, as an essential Point.

† The following Words are an Instance of the use of the Term *for ever*, being employed in speaking of Things now ended. *Thus saith the Lord; David shall never want a Man to sit upon the Throne of Israel. Neither shall the Priests and Levites want a Man before me, to offer Burnt Offerings, and to kindle Meat-Offerings, and to do sacrifice continually.* Jerem. xxxiii. 17, 18.

Here then are two sorts of Expressions placed in opposition one to the other, who shall judge which of them shall carry the Day? Perhaps, on a bare view of Terms only we shall find more and stronger in favour of a *Restoration* than against it. But even granting an Equality, what *Reason* shall turn the Scale? For, in short, we must have recourse to some *Reason*, since the Expressions themselves will be of *equal Weight*.

Hence it is evident, that the *Rule* proposed by Mr. R— is insufficient; that we must have recourse to something more *invariable*, than Expressions, how positive soever they may be supposed: that, as has been already said, we must go back to *fixed Principles* and *immutable Truths*.

This is exactly what was designed in the first Letter. Mr. R— must have mistaken the meaning of it; or he need not have given himself the trouble of turning the following Words into ridicule.

I ask, says the Author of the Letters, what is the foundation of the Proofs alledged for the support of the Eternity of Torments? Nothing but bare Expressions, to the number of three or four, an Eternity, a Worm that never dies, &c. How are the Proofs of the contrary Opinion supported? By the same immutable Truths, which are the Basis of all Religion.

Mr. R— by suppressing the latter Interrogatory, which serves as an Answer to the

I 5
former,

former, satisfies himself with bantering that first mention'd.

“ Here now, says he, is what we call
 “ Wit, and that of the most refined sort,
 “ which is employed in turning things,
 “ which the most clear-sighted imagine they
 “ see, to a Sense quite contrary to what they
 “ see. And on what, continues he, is the
 “ Opinion of those Gentlemen grounded?”

The Answer was not far off, if Mr. R— had been disposed to see it. He might have understood from the very Article, which he undertakes to confute, that the System of eternal Torments is supported by *Words*; whereas the contrary System is founded on *Things*.

All things rightly considered, we shall be oblig'd to come back to *Things*, to simple and clear Ideas, which cannot be susceptible of different Senses: We shall be sensible of the insuperable Difficulties, we shall meet with in making *Words* fight with *Words*, independently of the *Grand Principles*, which alone can give them light.

No Principle is so *simple* and *incontestable* as this, GOD is *good*. When we read this in Scripture, we do not receive it as a thing taught us by the Scripture, but as a thing which we knew before. The same is to be said of the *Equity* of GOD; the Testimony which the Scripture bears of it, gains our Assent immediately, a *Yes* or an *It is true*, beyond reply.

What

What doth this *Yes* prove? Do we say *It is true* of a thing of which we have no *Ideas*? It follows then, that we have *Ideas* of the *Divine Goodness* and *Equity*, independently of what the Scripture testifies of them; this is undoubted.

I ask, when any one confirms a thing to us, which we knew before, or unfolds the Consequences of things whose Principles were known to us, do we pretend to look for any Figure in the Words used? Do we make any difficulty of understanding them in a literal Sense?

When in the Scripture we read this express Declaration, *GOD wills that all Men should be saved*, is this any thing more than a Confirmation of that Principle, *GOD is good*; or, at least, a very natural Consequence from it?

Let us now see what *Reason* could hinder us from receiving those Words in their whole Extent, in the first sense they present to the Mind. Do we think such a Design unworthy of *GOD*? Would not the very *Idea* we entertain of his *Goodness* dictate it to us? And doth not the Testimony, which confirms it, carry an infinite Consolation for every one capable of feeling an impression? Doth it not find in him that *Yes*, that *It is true*, which leaves no doubt.

Again, I ask, when we read in the Scripture, that Men created after the Image of *GOD*, shall suffer in a burning Lake to all Eternity, do we find in ourselves any *Notion*,

any *Principles*, of which a *miserable Eternity* can be the *Consequence*? As we take a nearer view of it, do we feel that Assent, that *It is true, this is just*, which Truth forces from us, even in spite of ourselves?

The Objection that might be made, that our Interest is much more concerned in acquiescing in the first Opinion, than to the last, is of no weight.

I suppose a Man secure of his own Salvation, and whose private Interest is quite out of the question; I ask, whether such a Person could seriously pronounce in favour of a miserable Eternity, without shocking every Notion within him: I speak here of all such as have not made the Prejudices of Infancy the Foundation of their Judgments. I cannot believe they would espouse what Mr. R— advances concerning the Light of Nature.

“ All we can affirm with certainty, says he,
 “ is, That the Light of Nature seems rather
 “ to declare for the Eternity of Hell,
 “ than against it; because it tells us that
 “ Virtue ought to be rewarded, and Vice punished.” *page 37.*

Very well; but doth it suggest to us that this Punishment ought to be *eternal*? It would be an Affront to the Reader to undertake the Confutation of this Thesis. The same Light of Nature, if not stifled, will do the business better than the strongest Arguments.

Proofs.

Proofs in this Case are so numerous, they present themselves to the Mind so naturally, that it wou'd seem a mere Banter to attempt to produce them. There is reason to presume that those who shall live in the next Age, will be very much surprized that Men have been obliged to do it.

These Proofs are written in *large Characters* on every Part of Nature. The Author of Nature has not done this without Design; he himself sends us to that School. The most savage Animal takes care of its Young. The most hard-hearted of Men, sooner or later, shew themselves Fathers, to even the most ungrateful Children.

The Consequences arising from hence are so visible, that they would suffer from being particulariz'd; besides, we should inevitably fall into frequent Repetitions of what is already said in the Book of *Letters*; particularly in the Dissertation, which serves as an Introduction to that Work.

Its tendency is to shew that GOD, being essentially *happy*, is of course essentially *beneficent*; that, being *beneficent*, he could not produce Creatures from nothing, with any other View than that of making them happy: that, being supremely *wise*, he must have foreseen what would befall his Work, and the misery into which it might fall: that being infinitely *good*, he would not have produced an infinity of Creatures, had his Wisdom.

dom not found means for bringing them at last to *Happiness*, to the *End* of their Creation.

Here an Appeal is made to the Testimony of every Man, capable of thinking, whether, upon the supposition of his being able to produce *Beings* out of *Nothing*, without a Power of making them *happy*, he would not chuse to forbear such Creation. This Proof becomes still stronger by the Remark, which follows it in the introductory Dissertation; *viz.* that Men are born *miserable* before they become *criminal*; whence it follows, that if they were likewise born into the *Danger* of being eternally miserable, (which would be the Case of three parts in four of Mankind,) Brutes would be in a condition infinitely preferable. But I chuse to refer the Reader to the Piece itself, rather than give him any more Extracts from it in this place.

Though such *forcible Reasons* were confirmed in Scripture only by the two or three Declarations, I ask, whether they would not be of more *weight* than certain *Expressions*, which might seem to import the contrary. But we are not reduced so low; so far from being obliged to do violence to the Letter, in order to make it speak in favour of an universal *Restoration*, it must necessarily suffer Violence in a thousand places before that Opinion can be eluded.

How much pains doth Mr. R—take to
avoid

avoid the most natural Sense that presents itself to the Mind, when we meet with the Passages which mention the *Salvation of all Men, an universal Reconciliation of all Creatures to GOD*, the Design proposed by GOD of being one day *all in all*, of shewing *Mercy to all Men*, of making the *Gift* more extensive than the *Offence*, of repairing through JESUS CHRIST all the Damage which *Adam's* Disobedience may have done? I grant that the Words *all Men* sometimes stand for *many*; but what reason is there for taking them here in that limited Sense? I go still farther; we are so far from having a right to reduce the Term *all Men* to the Idea of *many*, that it is indisputable that the Word *many* frequently signifies *all Men*; and particularly in the present Question.

This appears from the Words of the Apostle. *As by one Man's Disobedience, many were made Sinners; so by the Obedience of one, shall many be made righteous**. I ask whether the Term *many* doth not here signify *all Men*. *All Men* became Sinners by *Adam*: Therefore *all Men* must be made *righteous* by JESUS CHRIST*.

Were

* It is matter of Surprise, that Mr. R— should quote a Text for the support of his System, which makes directly against him. He observes that, if there are several Passages, in which we find the Words *all Men*, there are others where we meet with the Word *Many*. He begins with that which says, JESUS CHRIST *has laid down his Life as a Ransom for many*. If for
many,

Were we reduced to the Necessity of proving the System of a *Restoration* by positive Declarations, this, among several others, would have no small weight; and I should desire Mr. R ——— to let me know in what sense the Word *many* is here to be understood.

He would perhaps deal with this Difficulty as he doth with the Words *always*, and *for ever*. According to him, when the *Vengeance* of GOD is concerned, *for ever* signifies *Eternity properly so called*: but when we are speaking of the Duration of his *Patience* and *Mercy*, that Term signifies the Time of this Life.

“ Several Passages are objected, says he,
 “ where it is said that GOD doth not chide
 “ *for ever*: That he keepeth not his Anger
 “ *for ever*. What is to be done in this Case?
 “ Are we to understand these Passages so as
 “ to open a door to the Repentance or Sal-
 “ vation of the Damned? This would over-
 “ throw the Doctrines, which I have estab-
 “ lished. One Truth can never contradict
 “ another. It is evident therefore, that all
 “ those Passages must be explained so as not
 “ to clash with the Doctrines already laid
 down;

many, says he, it is not therefore for *all*. And to complete his Proof, he concludes with that above produced, *As by one Man's Disobedience, &c.* If Mr. R— designs to persuade us that *all Men* are not to be made *righteous* through JESUS CHRIST, he must first prove that *all Men* were not made *Sinners* through *Adam*.

* This is said in express Terms, *Letter II.*

“ down; consequently we must give them
 “ a Sense, the Truth of which is confined to
 “ the present Life, and this is not difficult.”
 pag. 82. *

A very satisfactory Doctrine, and such as affords us very exalted Ideas of the divine Goodness, Wisdom, and Mercy!

When we read what the Scripture says of that eternal Mercy, we should be apt to imagine it invariably the same; and that its Course could never be stopt by a different manner of existing; this, at least, is the most natural Sense that presents itself to the Mind, on reading these Words: *He retaineth not his Anger for ever, because he delighteth in Mercy.* Micah vii. 18. *Thy Mercy O Lord, endureth for ever. Thou † wilt not forsake the Work of thy own Hands.* Psalm cxxxviii. 8. But this is a Mistake; the Passage from this to the other Life is sufficient for cutting off all Hopes in that Mercy which endures for ever: it has no farther Existence for a Person, snatched out of the World by an unforeseen Accident, perhaps in the Flower of his Age, before he was entirely converted ||:
 as

* We plainly see this is not difficult.

Note of the Translator.

† Thus our Author reads the Text of the *Psalmist*. The English Version has it; *Forsake not the Works of thy own Hands*; which is more agreeable to the *Original*, the *Septuagint*, and *Vulgate*.

|| Let us suppose two Men in the Flower of their Age, who have spent their Youth in a loose and disorderly manner. Let us suppose them exactly in the same.

as soon as this Soul has quitted the Body, it ceases to be the Work of GOD, who abandons it for ever*.

Who is it that teaches this Doctrine, against the exprefs Decisions of Scripture, and the clearest Notions of common Sense? 'Tis our Author, who has made no difficulty of asserting, that what the Scripture teaches us concerning the Patience and Mercy of GOD, must be confined to the narrow bounds of the present Life.

He goes still farther, and maintains that it would be impious to suppose this Mercy
can

same Degree of Dissoluteness; one of them is killed by a Stone: the other, who feels the fatal Stroke, awakes, reforms his Conduct, gives Proofs of a sincere Conversion, and dies some Years after in a Disposition very different from that of his Companion when he was taken off. According to the old System, one of them would be happy, and the other lost beyond all Recovery. Here now is an infinite Disproportion between the Conditions of these two Men. What is the Cause of this Disproportion? the Blow that fell on one rather than the other. From that moment Mercy can do nothing in favour of the unfortunate Man. Had the other been in his place, he had shared the same Fate. But what is a Blow, which has been decisive of an Eternity of Happiness or Misery? It is either Chance or Providence. Can we bear to think of the Consequences that follow?

* Nothing is so contrary to good Sense, as to limit the Divine Clemency and Mercy to the space of this Life, which is but the first Hour of Man's Duration. Shall a different manner of existing put it out of his power to feel the Effects of a Goodness, which is eternally the same? Doth the Separation of the Soul from the Body make it cease to be the Work of God; a Work which he cannot forsake?

can be extended beyond the present Life.

“ GOD, says he, having sworn in his
 “ wrath, that he will exclude from the hea-
 “ venly Rest, all such as disobey him obsti-
 “ nately; how dares any man venture to
 “ promise the Wicked that GOD will per-
 “ jure himself in their favour, and admit
 “ them into his Rest? Is not such a Thought
 “ shocking? In reality, a man must have a
 “ very strong stomach, to digest things so
 “ hard.” Page 65.

As Mr. R—— in this place indulges the transports of his Zeal, he has not observed that it is possible to give him an Oath, on the other side, much more expressive and formal, recorded by the Prophet *Isaiab.* *I have sworn by my self, saith GOD, and the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not be recalled; that every Knee shall bow before Me, and every Tongue shall swear by Me.*

I ask, which of the two Oaths is most solemn? *I have sworn in my wrath:* The very words insinuate that this Oath is not irrevocable; since GOD elsewhere declares, that he retaineth not his anger for ever. *That they should never enter into my rest.* But why must never here imply *Eternity properly so called?* Might it not signify a long *Duration*, an *indefinite time?* Mr. R—— reduces the word *for ever* much lower, when he restrains it to the present Life.

After this, is it highly injurious to the Deity to take literally a Promise made to all Mankind,

Mankind, confirmed by an Oath, where GOD swears *by himself*; to suppose a time will come, when all Creatures shall be brought back to the design of their Creation; a time when the *Blasphemy* of the Damned shall be changed into *Praise*, when every Creature shall do homage to the *Goodness* and *Justice* of the Creator; to suppose that this may be the *Restoration*, which GOD proposed by sending his Son? Is there any reason for crying out that *such Thoughts are shocking: that a man must have a very strong stomach to digest things so hard?*

Mr. R ——— has several other Ideas of the *Restoration* which JESUS CHRIST came to effect. Let us hear his own words on the Subject*, Page 101. “*John the Baptist,*” says he, speaking of JESUS CHRIST, “and of the design of his coming, says, “*He bath his fan in his hand, and will perfectly cleanse his floor.* And how is this “to be performed? By converting the Chaff “into good Corn? No. *He will gather the Wheat into his Barn, and burn the Chaff with unquenchable Fire* †. This is the *Re-* “*storation*

* Mr. R ——— makes this Paragraph follow a long Article concerning the Discord, which reigns in the World; but as the Question here turns on the *Restoration*, it was thought sufficient to quote this only.

† It is plain that the *Baptist* doth not here speak of the *universal Restoration*, but of the times of *Retribution* and *Vengeance*, which are to precede it. In a *literal*

“ *storation* to be expected. The Children
 “ of GOD shall be fully sanctified, and made
 “ subject to their heavenly Father.—The
 “ Wicked (*that is, above three fourths of Man-*
 “ *kind*) sentenced to the bottomless Pit, shall
 “ no longer be able to seduce or abuse them.
 “ Will not this be a magnificent *Restoration*,
 “ and worthy of the Wisdom, Goodness,
 “ Power, and Sanctity of GOD?”

Let it be observed, at least, that these are Mr. Professor's own Words; for some might think this an Irony designed for ridiculing the pretended *Restoration*, which he calls *magnificent*, and in which he makes all terminate.

Is it necessary to undertake a serious Confutation of this Doctrine? I would desire no other Judge on this occasion than a *Savage*. In order to make him such, I would use an example suited to his capacity.

I would suppose a rich Man, Father of a large Family, who, among a number of Children, had some well-disposed and obedient, while the majority of them were vicious, and created disorder in his house. What method does this Father take for re-
 establishing

literal Sense, he had the destruction of the *Jews* in view; in a *spiritual*, the Fire of Justice which is to consume all Injustice. If the *Jews*, whose Destruction he foretels, are to be restored, doth not even that lead us to the Idea of a more universal Restoration? Besides, the Term *unquenchable Fire* amounts to no more in this place than those of *always* and *for ever*.

establiſhing Order in his Family? After ſome ſevere Reprimands, he allows his rebellious Children * a Month for amending their Lives. They ſtill continuing in their evil courſes, the Father enters on other meaſures: He orders them all to be ſhut up in dungeons, to be fed with Bread and Water, while his favourite Children enjoy Plenty, and live at their eaſe.

But the *Savage* will ſay, thoſe dungeons are probably places of Correction, deſigned to bring them to their duty; after which, the Father will receive them among their Brethren. No, ſay I, they are *Prifons*, from which they will *never* be delivered: The Father diſinherits them *for ever*; he will hear nothing more in their favour; thus he re-eſtabliſhes Order in his Family. How! ſays the *Savage*; ſhall thoſe unfortunate Children be allowed but one Month for reforming their Conduct? Shall their Imprifonment never have an end? Shall there be no relief for them? Would that be juſt? And with what eye, continues he, can the other Children look on the deſperate ſtate of their Brethren?

The others, ſay I, will form Concerts of Joy, and praiſe the goodneſs of their Father, in providing ſo well for them. They will think of the *Miſery* of their unhappy Brethren, only

* The longeſt Life, when compared to Eternity, is leſs than an Hour, when compared to the longeſt Life. Judge then if there is any exaggeration in comparing the preſent Life to one Month.

only to give them a higher relish of their own *Happiness*. Would not this be a *magnificent Restoration*? and such as furnishes us with exalted Ideas of the Father's wisdom. I leave every one to judge what the *Savage* would think of it. But what would he think, should I add one Circumstance more to the account; and tell him, that this Father was able to reduce his rebellious Children to their duty: that he could thus have established order and harmony in his whole Family; that all this was in his power, but he *would not* do it? To this Circumstance, which can hardly enter into one's thoughts, all that remains would be to add *Eternity* instead of *Time*; this is, as to the substance, a just Idea of the System of the *Particularists*.

This surprizing Proposition, that GOD *could* * *save all men, but will not*, is not unjustly charged on them; at least if Mr. R— is well acquainted with their System, as he certainly

* If it were proper for any to adopt the System of a *Restoration*, it certainly is so for such, as hold absolute Election and Reprobation. When we hear it said, that all Men are predestined, before their Birth, some to eternal Happiness, others to Torments for several Ages; we should be surprized, and immediately ask, why so wide a Disproportion? However, when it is added, that all shall at last be brought to Bliss, the Mind would be comforted, though it could not be satisfied with the Thought. But when the Idea of *endless Duration* is joined to that of *absolute Reprobation*, it is hard to conceive what a Man must be made of, to bear such a Prospect; and we are obliged to suppose those who admit it, have never well considered it.

certainly is. He makes this objection to himself: "Is GOD almighty? Can he not renew them, and give them repentance by the miraculous Force of his Holy Spirit? He can, without doubt, but he *will* not."

I doubt whether the Sticklers for this System can bear the sight of such an Idea. They will be obliged to have recourse to some verbal distinctions for palliating or extenuating what is insupportable in it.

The Doctrine of the *Universalists*, of those who maintain the Eternity of Hell, though defective, has yet nothing so shocking. GOD, say they, would that all Men were saved*; but as he will not constrain their Liberty, he permits them to run into eternal Damnation†: that is, to speak plainly, GOD could not in all Eternity find means for reducing Men to order, in a manner consistent with Liberty; his *Wisdom* wants helps for succeeding in the attempt. In short, this is to suppose that the Deity

* The Patrons of this System, at least, do justice to infinite *Goodness*. They suppose the Invitation of GOD to Men sincere. But, to suppose the *infinitely perfect* Being proposes a Design, in which he miscarries, implies a Contradiction.

† He certainly permits them to run into it; but the question is, whether he will leave them there for ever: Whether his *Wisdom* will not provide them with some means for quitting that State; whether, supposing he has formed such a Design, he will not be able to execute it. See an Answer to this in the *Dissertation on the Nature of Evil*, &c. after the fifth of the *fourteen Letters*.

Deity hath an *End* worthy of perfect Goodness, but cannot compass that *End*.

Hence it is evident, that both Systems are attended with insuperable Difficulties : that they are incompatible with the Idea of the *perfect Being*. Accordingly, we see the Divines of both Parties accuse each other of injuring some one of the divine Attributes.

Does a Man do them an ill office, who endeavours to terminate their difference, and offers them a System, freed from those difficulties, which give the *Pyrrhonists* an advantage ?

Has Mr. R—— reason to complain that we take part with the Enemies of Religion, by furnishing them with arms against it ? Can a Man be said to oppose Religion, who divests it of what is *foreign* to it, or what renders it contemptible to such as know it only by the Dress with which it is disguised ?

May not we find some sincere, well-meaning Persons, among those whom we call *Deists*, who have an aversion to Christianity only on account of the Contradictions they imagine they see in it ? Are we not obliged to do something for such Men, if any such there be ? While we do them this good office, we do it to others, who might suffer themselves to be prejudiced against Religion by them. But a stiff and rigorous opposition of their Difficulties would not be the most proper means for reclaiming them. It is not impossible they may sometimes be in

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the right; and an attention to what Truth they may say, is a duty which we owe ourselves. If they have attacked the Doctrine of the Eternity of Hell, without sufficient reason, and consider'd it as inseparable from our Religion, are we to be surprized at their aversion to Christianity?

I think, Sir, I have already said enough for defending the *fourteen Letters*, or, at least, for shewing they have suffer'd nothing from the Criticisms lately published by Mr. R—.

P O S T S C R I P T.

NO direct Answer has been given to Mr. R—'s Objection concerning the Passage relating to *Judas*, and that concerning *Matt. xxv. 46.* But I think what has been already said contains an indirect Answer.

It has been shewn that JESUS CHRIST died for all Men; *Judas* is one of that number: *that every Tongue shall at last give praise to GOD*; *Judas* cannot be excluded. Let us now consider in what Circumstances our Lord pronounces those words, *it had been good for that Man, if he had not been born.* Did he pronounce them *dogmatically*, in order to make of them what we call an *Article of Faith*, in order to inform us, without the least ambiguity, what will be the final state of the Damned? This is far from being the case. It appears here that our Lord consider'd the
Con-

Condition of the Wretch who was on the point of betraying him: that, terrified at the torments he was to endure, he speaks in a manner conformable to the state of Despair, into which his Crime would throw him. And who doubts that the torments which *Judas* felt, made him wish a thousand times that he had never been born*? If *Job's* extreme Affliction forced such wishes from him, is it surprising that a *Judas*, who certainly knew not whether those Torments would have an end or not, should actually prefer Annihilation to Being?

After all, though we could not explain the Sense meant by our Saviour†, when he spoke these words, what would follow? That the *Certain* cannot be shaken by the *Uncertain*; and that an *obscure* Proposition, in a *particular* Case, can never be allow'd good Evidence against *plain* and *universal* Propositions.

But our Lord says, *Matt. xxv. 46. The Wicked shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.*

Here, we are told, is a miserable Eternity, opposed to a blessed Eternity; why must one be admitted with restriction, and the other in an absolute sense? It might be a sufficient Answer, that *Expressions* can never overthrow a

K 2

Truth

* This notwithstanding, when *Judas* is once re-established, he may then own it was good for him to have received a Being.

† It would be ridiculous to ground our Reasonings on a thing we do not comprehend.

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Truth established on *fixed Principles*. The Punishment of *eternal Fire*, which consumed *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, might likewise be opposed to the Expression of *everlasting Punishment*. The former of these Expressions, opposed to the latter, may be sufficient for rendering it ambiguous. But, let us come to the Reasons which induce us to admit of a happy Eternity in an absolute Sense, and a miserable Eternity in a limited sense.

The word *Punishment* join'd to that of *Eternity* has something contradictory. When we mention *Punishment*, we speak of a *violent state*, a forced situation, the *Cause* of which is accidental, foreign to the nature of the thing, and which consequently cannot endure to Eternity.

Eternity, join'd to a happy Life, is so far from implying any thing contradictory, that it is admitted without the least difficulty. The happy Life has always existed in GOD; it is eternal as GOD Himself*. There is no difficulty in supposing that what proceeds from an *eternal Principle*, exists *eternally*. But it is infinitely hard † to suppose the *Eternity* of a *violent Situation*, of which *Disorder* is the *Principle*. Now

* If GOD has granted created Beings the Privilege of existing *eternally*, he certainly did so in regard to that happy Life, of which he is the *Principle*; not in regard to that State of *Punishment*, which is merely *accidental*.

† This is fully explained in the *Dissertation on the Nature of Evil*, &c. to be seen after the fifth of the fourteen Letters.

Now let any Man judge what must be here meant by the Expression of *everlasting Punishment* *.

L E T T E R III.

I Own, Sir, that there are several Articles in the *Enquiry into Origenism*, which I have passed by unobserved. I thought it sufficient to support or defend the Principles of the Work; and that I might easily be excused answering such Passages as rather attack the Author than his Book.

Thus I have said nothing to that long Article, where Mr. R—— confounding Dr. *Petersein* with the Letter-writer, attacks the first of those Authors on account of some Quotations from *Virgil*, which he says are not exact; and the Conclusion from which, by way of Reverberation, makes directly against those whom he stiles *Origenists*.

“ I was of opinion, says he, that it would
“ not be improper to enlarge a little on this
“ Subject, in order to let the Publick know,
“ from the Example of Dr. *Petersein*, the

K 3

“ great

* A violent State, when of long duration, must appear a sort of Eternity to those so situated. 'Tis probably in this sense that our Lord calls it *eternal Punishment*. Mr. R—— grants that the word *eternal* sometimes denotes the whole time that a thing may last. I desire no other Explication. The *Eternity* of *Evil* will be conformable to the nature of *Evil*: *Evil* is not *eternal* in its Origin; therefore it will not be *eternal* in its Duration.

“ great *Patriarch* * of the *Origenists*, that
 “ those Gentlemen are not nice in the choice
 “ of their Proofs; for if he has dared to mis-
 “ quote a Pagan Author, in the hands of eve-
 “ ry School-boy ——— ought not his Rea-
 “ ders to be on their guard against the Quo-
 “ tations produced from Scripture by him
 “ and his Disciples after him?”

The Conclusion, we see, is levelled at the Author of the *Letters*, who, according to Mr. R—— is Dr. *Petersein's* Disciple. This is admirable! to be the Disciple of a Doctor whom he never knew †, either personally or by any of his Writings; and, which is more, to have borrow'd of him the Art of misquoting, &c. this is what no Man would ever have imagined.

What

* Writers will perhaps some time or other leave off the unjust Practice of charging all those with the same things, who chance to think alike on certain Points, and who in other respects can have no relation one to the other.

Take this as an Instance..

The *Jansenists* believe absolute Predestination.

Mr. R—— believes the same.

Therefore Mr. R—— is a *Jansenist*; *Jansenius* is his Patriarch.

Again, some one *Jansenistical* Doctor is not very nice in the Choice of his Proofs, and misquotes Authors to serve his Purpose.

Therefore Mr. R—— is likewise not very nice in the Choice of his Proofs, &c.

† This is not to be taken as meant against the Doctor: the Author would do him all the Justice he may deserve, with pleasure, was he acquainted with what regards him, by reading his Works.

What do you think now, Sir? Are these Articles such as deserve a Confutation? I say the same of the Explication he quotes from the Doctor, for which, without doubt, he makes his pretended Disciple answerable *. I own I should have been but an untoward Disciple, so far as that Explication is concerned. A Man need not be a profound Logician, to discover the Sophistry of it.

I thought I might likewise pass over the Article which affords Mr. R—— so happy an opportunity of exclaiming. Page 107. Let us see on what Foundation he does it. He quotes the following Passage from the second Letter :

This Separation of the Soul from the Body is not what the Scriptures call Death. They term it only Sleep ; and particularly in the Chapter, where St. Paul speaks of the Dead under the appellation of Sleepers, or those who sleep. But what they call Death, the Great Death, is the Disunion of the Soul from GOD. He ought to have added what follows ; This Death was meant, when Adam was told that the day he should eat of the forbidden Fruit he should surely die.

Here Mr. R—— is amazed ; he is doubtful whether he is awake or not, or whether he ought to believe his own Eyes. He concludes,

K 4

how-

* The Explication is this : *The Fire shall not be extinguished while Hell endures ; but Hell will not endure for ever.*

however, that the Author was asleep when he wrote this.

“ It follows therefore, says he, from our Author’s Principles, that all those who the Scripture says are *dead*, are disunited from GOD, are damned.”

The Consequence is wonderful. When we read that *Noah* and *Joshua* died, we are to understand that they are *damned*. Do you think, Sir, a Man is obliged to justify himself, and deny so ridiculous a Consequence ?

It might be sufficient for me to ask Mr. R—— whether the Term *Death* hath not different Significations in Scripture? Whether when St. *Paul* says he hoped GOD would hereafter deliver him *from so great a Death*, 2 Cor. i. 10. he hoped he should not die corporally? Whether when our Saviour says, *John* viii. 51. *he who keeps his Word, shall never see death*, he had this bodily Death in view. If so, the *Jews* would have had good reason to reproach our Lord, and, taking those Words in a literal Sense, say to him, *Abraham is dead, and the Prophets are dead; who makest thou thy self?*

Under pretence that in the figurative Sense, the Term *Death* usually signifies *spiritual Death**, will it follow that there is some Mystery

* When our Lord says, *Let the Dead bury their Dead*, what could he mean? Did *Adam* die *bodily* the very day he eat of the forbidden Fruit? Our Lord says likewise, *he who liveth and believeth in me shall never die*. It is probable he doth not here promise an Exemption from bodily Death. Nor is it less evident. that bodily Death

Mystery in the historical Sense, when it is said that *Abraham* is dead? I must own that there seems so little room for mistake here, that if Mr. R—— had not obliged me to take notice of it, I should have pass'd it over in silence.

Is there any necessity of an Answer to that Article of the *Restoration of all things*? Mr. R—— begins with the Remark quoted *Chap. 2d*, instead of *Chap. 3d*. He then quarrels with his Antagonist for not quoting the Passage at length. That might have been necessary, had we pretended to establish the whole System on that single Passage. It would then have been necessary to particularize the least Syllables; but there is no design here of using it as a Proof; it is only quoted by the way, without dwelling on it one moment. It is affirmed, that JESUS CHRIST *came to restore all things*. This is not cited as a Passage, but as a Proposition. It is added, that this *Restoration is mention'd in the Acts of the Apostles*; which is all that is said.

K 5

Mr.

Death is expressed by *sleeping*, in the same Chapter which gives Mr. R—— occasion to exclaim. In 1 Cor. xv. St. Paul speaks of *those who die in CHRIST*. And again, CHRIST *is become the first Fruits of those who sleep*. He elsewhere says, *I would not have you ignorant concerning those who sleep*. In reality, the whole enquiry is, whether *bodily Death* is not frequently expressed by the Term *Sleep*; and whether *spiritual Death* is not as frequently expressed by the word *Death*? *Bodily Death* then is only a Consequence of *spiritual Death*: it is no more than a *transitory Accident* of it. So that when GOD speaks of his deceased Servants, he says they are *fallen asleep*. Mr. R—— wou'd not have been so much amazed, had he observed this.

Mr. R—— takes a great deal of unnecessary pains to shew that this Passage doth not prove the *universal Restoration*. I am willing to grant it; but what will he gain by the Concession, since it was not grounded on that Passage?

I say the same of several other Passages, such as *Coloss. i. 1. Ephes. xv.* and more of the same kind, which are employ'd only *ex abundanti*, not as capital Proofs. Mr. R—— having laboured hard to prove what they do not signify, takes no less pains to prove what they do signify. If he pleases, we will give them all up, without fearing the Edifice will be shaken. I think I have demonstrated that is founded on *Things*, not on *Expressions*, the Sense of which may be disputed.

Mr. N—— observes likewise, that I have left one important Article unjustified. According to Mr. R—— it is dangerous to publish a System, *which may do so much Mischief in the world, and no Good*. This ought to have been made out. It is thought that the contrary is proved in the sixth Letter.

But, waving that Letter, I ask the Reader, whether the Spirit which runs through the whole Work, doth in the least lead Men to Irreligion and Security, as Mr. R—— supposes?

“Is it a small matter, says he, to do the
“office of the Tempter; to destroy Souls, by
“weakening the Motives to the Fear of GOD,
“and open a door to Remissness?” Page 27.

It

It would be difficult to answer this Accusation, without repeating what has been already said in the sixth Letter. I rather chuse to refer the Reader to that Letter than transcribe it here. I might, with some reason, ask Mr. R—— whether he has read it or not. If not, I retract. We have seen Mr. R—— quotes it, however, as well as the fourteenth. See what he says of them.

“ They pretend, says he, that their System
 “ is better calculated than that of the Ortho-
 “ dox, for conveying just Ideas of GOD, of
 “ his Justice and Goodness ; for making
 “ Men love him, and serve him with Love
 “ and Openness of Heart. The Author im-
 “ ploys two Letters (the sixth and fourteenth)
 “ on this Subject, where he labours hard to
 “ prove his assertion by arguments.” *Page 21.*

Mr. R——therefore ought to have attack'd those Arguments. But has he done it? He takes a shorter way, and appeals to Experience. *To what purpose is it, says he, to argue against Experience? Page 21.*

The Proof is demonstrative. In reality, what wonderful Effects has not the opinion of a miserable Eternity produced, among Christians, during the 1700 Years it has been preached, and the Belief of it professed? Mr. R——allows indeed that they are still wicked, profane, &c. in spite of that Persuasion. But he pretends they would be much more so, if this Restraint was removed.

“ Oh ! says he, may the Mercy of GOD
 “ never permit the Opinion of those Gentle-
 “ men to prevail in the world ; it would soon
 “ produce horrible Confusion.” p. 23.

At this rate, Mr. R— appeals to future Experience, not to the Experience of what has already happen'd. The question is, what would be the Event, if the System of a *Restoration* should be received among Christians, as long as that of a *miserable Eternity* has been taught and believed. In that case we must wait sixteen or seventeen hundred Years ; and then, by comparing the History of those two Periods, we shall be able to take Experience for our Judge.

In the mean time, it may be observed that the Experience of what is past is not a Prejudice very favourable to the *Thesis*, which Mr. R— undertakes to maintain.

Let us now enquire what Springs are most proper for putting Men in action, or restraining them.

Religion, it will be said, is one of the strongest, on account of the Motives of *Fear*, which it offers. It is well known what Impression *Fear* makes on the Mind. Now nothing is so dreadful as the Menace of eternal Torments. If, therefore, you remove that Restraint, you deprive Religion of the power it would have had to check Men in their vicious Courses.

I readily own that *Fear* may do much with Men, and that if Religion was deprived of all
 Motives

Motives of *Fear*; it would make but little Impression on them. But then I maintain, that if this *Fear* is not grounded on the *Principles* of *Justice*, which Man finds engraved on his own Heart, it will have no force. I think it may not be improper to insert in this place, what appears in form of a Note on the sixth Letter.

All things rightly consider'd, the most terrible Ideas, and such as make the strongest Impression on Men, are those, the Truth of which is perceived, and to which common Sense is obliged to subscribe. Every Opinion, that proceeds from a false Principle, destroys itself; or, which is worse, produces the contrary of what is expected from it.

Nothing that is over-strained, or seems exaggerated, strikes the Mind. Let a School-master tell his Scholar that his Father will hang him, if he doth not study; he laughs at the Menace: it is too much disproportioned both to his own demerits, and the Idea he entertains of his Father's Equity. Even Children have an Idea of *Proportion*: It is not in our power to efface it: we are never persuaded by what Men would make us fear, if it is *disproportioned* to what we are sensible we have deserved: Nor are we encouraged or satisfied, when flattered with what is contrary to the same Proportion. If *Sense* and *Evidence* do not confirm what is designed to be inculcated, we are never convinced: at most, we only imagine.

imagine we believe it ; it is no more than *Opinion*, that resides in the Brain.

Of this sort is the Opinion of a miserable Eternity. I dare be positive, that no Man is really persuaded of it*. I appeal to the Conscience of the most profligate Men upon earth (for there are some Moments when even Men of that Character are forced to listen to Conscience) what sort of an *Hereafter* it would offer to his view. A terrible Retribution ; which he will be obliged to own he has deserved. Let him, for example, imagine a hundred Years spent in Torments, or two, or three thousand, if you please ; he will be so amazed and stupified, that he will not know where to stop ; but will not dare to pronounce it unjust : he has no distinct Idea of the more or less†. Let somebody come to him, while

his
* Men are accustomed to the loose Term of *Eternity* ; and those who profess to believe it, consent to it in a loose manner, without any Idea of what it implies. If the most zealous Partizans of this Opinion would seriously consider the meaning of *Duration without End* ; would they begin with some Calculation, stop at the end of some thousands of Ages, and consider the state of those who have passed all those Ages in Torments ; and then ask themselves, whether it is possible that those miserable Persons should be no farther advanced than they were the first day of their Sufferings ; I am persuaded they would then be obliged either to turn their Eyes from such Objects, or allow that their loose Assent was very far from a Persuasion.

† We can entertain no distinct and clear Idea of the *Duration* of the Punishment to be suffered ; because in order to know that, we must first know the *Degree* of it, and
we

his Thoughts are thus employ'd, and tell him it is to no purpose for him to reckon Years, Ages, thousands of Ages, &c. that at the end of the Supputation, he will find a whole Eternity before him; I ask whether the Conscience of even such a Man would not be startled and shock'd at the Prospect: whether, instead of the *Yes*, which the strength of Truth forces from us, he would not feel within himself a determined *No*, a *That would be unjust; I have not deserved it.*

I am persuaded that Men, did they but consult their own Consciences, would feel the same Shock, both in regard to themselves and their Neighbour: for, in short, I suppose such as have no reason to fear for themselves, are capable of being concern'd for others; and I own I was not a little surprized at what Mr. R—— says on this Subject.

“ When we shall be in a condition of no longer fearing those Pains, it will be of little importance to us, whether they are eternal or not*. What concern is it to us to know whether the Torments of Hell will be eternal or not? Though we were certainly

ly we ought to be thoroughly acquainted with the Nature of the *Evil* which it is to destroy, before we can form a right Judgment of either. But when the question turns on *Infinity*, or *Duration without End*, every thing within declares for the *Negative*.

* This Indifference would pretty much resemble that which has been supposed in those Children, who rejoice at their own Happiness, without giving themselves any Concern whether their Brethern are happy or miserable.

“ly assured they will not be so, of what use
“would that Knowledge be to us?”

I ask, in my turn, whether it is of any importance to know the GOD, whom we profess to serve under the Idea of the *perfect Being*; under the Idea of a Being, whose Attributes are so far from destroying each other*, that they invariably concur to the same end: of a Being as *beneficent as equitable*; all whose *Designs* are advantageous to Mankind, and who cannot miscarry in the execution of them?

Is it possible for us to pay sincere Homage to the *Justice* of a *partial* Being, who should weigh Men in an unequal Balance, who should place between Men of the same origin, the infinite disproportion of a happy and miserable Eternity?

Is it possible for us to admire the *Wisdom* of a Being, who through the immense Space of Eternity, could not find means for restoring his Work?

Should we entertain exalted Ideas of a *Goodness* which should confine itself to a small number of Creatures, and consent to leave the greatest part of them in eternal Torments?

When we launch out into Praises of the great *Goodness* of GOD, and at the same time suppose that an infinity of Creatures will never feel the Effects of it, to what is our Idea of it reduced? On this Supposition, I do not
praise

* It is impossible to reconcile Goodness with Justice by the System of a miserable Eternity.

praise GOD as a Being *essentially* and *universally* *beneficent*, but as a Being, who does ME good. When I admire the *Preference* * which GOD gives me to others, and thank him for it, do I not tacitly praise him for being *partial*? In this case I do not admire a Perfection in GOD, but rejoice at the Advantage I receive from him.

All things rightly consider'd, whatever satisfaction a Man feels, who thinks himself thus favoured, it is not so secure but it may be disturbed. If the Benevolence of GOD is not *absolute* to all Men, who can assure me I am not one of those, who shall be excluded from it? For, in short, whatever share I imagine I have in the divine Favour, I may be one of those, who have been *illuminated*, have tasted of the *Celestial Gift*, and afterwards *relapse*.

In reality, if the *Soul* of Religion consists in a Dependance on the Deity †, not in a *forced* manner, but by *free Choice*, I am of opinion that it concerns us to know him under Ideas different from those which the old System affords. In order to do that, there is no necessity of *inventing* or forming new Ideas; it is sufficient

* That is, if thi Preference goes so far as to place between one Man and another the infinite Disproportion of a happy and miserable Eternity.

† Nothing is so comfortable as a Dependance on a Being, who wills our Happiness in an absolute manner, and is thoroughly acquainted with the roads that may lead us to it. But to depend on a Being, who perhaps doth not admit us into the rank of those whom he will make happy; this can be done only by force.

cient that we allow those already engraved on our Minds, to *manifest* or *offer* themselves *.

Again, if we are concern'd to know Religion under an Idea different from that of a *Chaos* †, we are concerned to be disabused of the *Eternity* of Hell.

After this, can we be *Men* ‡, and look on the rest of Mankind with Indifference?

Let us suppose a Citizen of a great City, who supposing it on the Point of being burnt, should, in conjunction with some of his Friends, be favour'd with the Privilege of being saved from the Flames; I imagine that such a
Man,

* Several, who have read the *Letters*, have experienced this. They have found that they *unfold* to their Minds the Ideas which they before entertained *indistinctly*, and which were as it were clouded with *Prejudice* and *Credulity* in the Doctrines of Men.

† The System of a miserable *Eternity* produces a most extravagant *Chaos*; it destroys the whole Idea of Providence, and leads us to doubt of every thing. Put that of a *Restoration* in its place, the *Chaos* is cleared up. *Harmony* and Order shine forth; if not in this World, we have a glimpse of it, at least, in the Scenes of the World to come.

‡ Men of a *Beneficent* Character, who have cultivated Sentiments of Humanity in their Minds, feel an inexpressible Satisfaction in considering all Men, as destined to the Enjoyment of the same Happiness. It is hard for such as consider only a very small Number as *Elect*, not to conceive a certain Contempt and Aversion for the generality of Mankind. With how different an Eye do we look on Men, when we are assured that they will all, without exception, enter into the Designs of GOD on Mankind; Men, who, according to St. Paul, are *formed of one Blood*, and being the *Offspring* of GOD himself, must at last necessarily be brought back to their Father. See what is said of the Love of our Neighbour in the fourteenth Letter.

Man, being uncertain of the Truth of the matter, should say to his Friends, *What Concern is it to us to know, whether it will be burnt or not*, since we shall not be included in the Ruin?

I do not pretend to charge Mr. R—— with Sentiments so void of Humanity. I suppose this Conclusion escaped him before he saw the Consequences of it. I have observed that, in his Preface, *Page 5.* he advances what seems to speak the contrary. “ I am satisfied, says he, that all Christian Divines, not excepting those, who are the farthest advanced in Sanctity, will hardly say to those Persons, *Let the LORD do as you say, let him execute what you teach.*”

I think therefore, to proceed equitably, I ought to employ this Passage for rectifying the disadvantageous Impressions, that the opposite Language might produce against Mr. R——.

But since he is pleased to allow that it were to be wished all Men might be saved; I wou’d fain know on what he grounds the *Impossibility* of a Work so worthy of GOD, and so advantageous to Mankind. It cannot be on an Impossibility on GOD’s side; for those Gentlemen maintain that *all Things* are *possible* to him. This being supposed, we must conclude that GOD *can* do it, but *will* not. Let us dwell no longer on this Subject, since it has been already handled.

Mr. R—— finishes his conclusion by adding: “ Though we had a Certainty that the
“ Tor-

236 . L E T T E R III.

“ Torments of Hell will not be Eternal, of
 “ what other use wou’d such an Assurance
 “ be to us, but to throw us into Security?”
 “ Page 30.

Perhaps, the *Restoration*, were it considered alone and independent of the Torments which must precede it, might incline Men to Remissness; but it is impossible to separate one from the other. This is so true, that if we were to tell the most stupid that all Men shall be restored immediately after they quit this Life, without receiving the just Retribution of the *Evil* they have done, I am persuaded no Man could assent to it, how much soever his Interest might be concerned in believing it.

It is after the terrible Idea of a State of *Weeping, gnashing of Teeth, Hell, and a burning Lake*, that the Idea of a *Restoration* is received, and is in its proper place. The more we are persuaded the Torments will have an end, the more we are convinced that each Man must bear the Punishment of his own Iniquity, and that in the most *exact proportion*.

This has been proved in the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Letters, in a manner, which leaves but little room for Security. I am of opinion that no Man will resolve to make a Trial of the Hell there described, under pretence that it will have an end. Not to mention the Hell, which regards only the Reprobate;

Reprobate; is there any stronger Preservative against Security than the Idea of that Purification which every Creature must undergo, in proportion to the Degree of *Evil* which shall be found in him?

Mr. R—— in more than one place, speaks of the danger of leading to Remissness. Doth he not observe that he himself has done this by endeavouring to overthrow that Truth founded on the Idea of *Proportion*, and the very Nature of *Good* and *Evil*? He supposes he has really overthrown it; which I still doubt. It is evident, at least, that he attacks not one of the Principles which support it. The Reader need only peruse the 9th, 10th and 11th Letters, to be convinced of this.

See how he cuts the *Gordian Knot*. “ I have already, says he, overthrown this Supposition (speaking of the *Purification*) by shewing from clear and decisive Texts of Scripture, that after Death there is no room for Repentance, no more Sacrifice for Sin: that the present Life is the Time of GOD’s Patience, and consequently of Man’s Purification.” Here he quotes *Rom. xi. 4. Page 67.*

He then concludes: “ I might add several things against the *Purification*; but that wou’d carry me too far: the Answer I have given, is of itself sufficient for overthrowing this whole System of Revolutions in the other World, which is built only
“ on

“ on the warm Imagination of these Gentle-
“ men.”

This is soon said; this is overthrowing a System with a single Finger. Several Persons will find their Account in depending on this Decision *. Who knows but those, who suffer themselves to be amused in this manner, may one day find by Experience, that this System had a Foundation, very different from a warm Imagination; and whether they will thank the Doctors, who have so successfully flattered them?

I should pass for a Dealer in Paradoxes, if I said that the Orthodox System of the Eternity of Hell has been hitherto the most efficacious Snare for throwing Men into Security. But I prove it thus:

In what shall we make the Preservatives, given by GOD against Security, consist? Is it not in the *Ideas* of an *immutable Justice* engraven on the Mind, which renders to every one according to his Deeds in the most exact *Proportion*? In the Judgment pronounced by Conscience against all *Injustice* and *voluntary Illusion*?

Has he not added to this interior Testi-
mony,

* The Author does not here speak of open and notorious Sinners; but of Persons, who believing themselves secure from Eternal Damnation, are over-joyed at persuading themselves, that there is no *Medium*, between this Hell and Paradise; whence it follows, that on quitting this Life, Paradise is infallibly open to them.

mony, that which the Scripture every where bears of the same *Justice*, which makes every one *reap* according to what he has *sown*?

Are not these the strongest Motives for a *well-grounded* Fear; grounded, I say on a *Justice*, from which we cannot fly, and on which we cannot impose?

But what is more proper for stifling this just *Fear*, grounded on the Idea of a *Proportion*, than the View of a System, which ranks all Men in two Classes at an infinite distance from each other; and which, while it supposes a *good* and *merciful* GOD, threatens eternal Torments, and leaves no Expectation of others?

This Idea of *Mercy*, opposed to the Menace of *eternal Fire*, either destroys it, or renders it useless. An Idea of *Repentance*, or recourse to that *Mercy*, immediately secures us from all *Retribution*. And how comfortable is it to be able to get rid of the troublesome Idea of an *exact Retribution* from *immutable Justice*, which will not hold the *Guilty innocent*?

'Tis by inculcating such a System, that Men are hardened against those *just Fears* imprinted in their Minds, by a secret Sentiment; they have been insensibly accustomed to silence those troublesome Thoughts, and substitute in their room certain Opinions grounded on Scripture-Expressions. No Pretence has been made, however, for removing a *restraint*

so necessary as that of *Fear*; on the contrary, we have been presented with the most *terrifying Idea*, which can enter the Imagination; that of an *everlasting Fire*. Can any thing exceed this? No certainly; but what is the Consequence of it? As it is frightful or *inconceivable*, it affects no Man. No one thinks himself deserving of a Punishment, which cannot even enter the Mind; and as soon as it is determined that no other is to be expected, what is more easy than to take courage against the secret Apprehensions which might make us fear the contrary?

Is it not evident then, that the Menace of *eternal Fire* is become a mere *Bug-bear*? It affrights Men for a moment; but cannot produce the least Effect either on the *Heart* or *Actions*.

Mr. R — speaks of the horrible Confusion, which we should see in the World, if the Opinion of eternal Torments was discarded. I should be tempted to ask him, what sort of Confusion this wou'd be. Perhaps, he might say, of what are not Men capable, who are under no restraint from Religion or Fear *? But it has been proved that the Opinion in question

* Every one allows, that the Fear of Hell may serve to awaken Men, and keep them within Bounds to a certain degree; but the Question is, whether *Hell* ceases to be *Hell* the Moment we suppose it will have an *End*: Whether Torments endured many Ages, perhaps many Thousands of Years, are not sufficiently dreadful.

question is more proper for destroying, than exciting a *just Fear*.

Let us consider the matter in another Light. Men are capable of two sorts of Disorder; a *gross* one, which appears by enormous Crimes; and a secret and *refined* one, hardly known even to the Persons guilty of it. I ask which of these Disorders will be remedied by the Opinion of eternal Torments? Not that *refined Evil*, which is coloured over with the Appearance of *Good*. Men in this Case are very far from having any thing to fear. It must therefore be the *gross* Disorder which this Menace stops. Very well; but supposing there was no *human Justice*, no Prisons, nor *Gibbets*, do you imagine this Menace wou'd have much Force over the Mind? While Men can privately encroach on the Rights of others, enrich themselves, or raise their Fortune on the Ruins of that of their Neighbours; I ask whether the Idea of everlasting Fire, proves a restraint to them or not. I do not here speak of profligate Sinners, but of such as pass on the World for honest Men. Perhaps, the Idea of an *inevitable Retribution* *, if they did not stifle it, wou'd produce some Effect toward restrain-

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* If the Idea of the Punishments of the other World was grounded on the Nature of Things, on the essential Connection between *Moral Evil* and *Pain*, between what we *sow*, and what we *reap*; it would be impossible for Men to flatter themselves with Impunity: whereas the gross Idea of a Menace made by G O D, and which he may not put in execution, leaves them in a false Assurance, which stifles *true Fear*.

ing them; but as for *eternal Torments*, they are in good hopes of escaping them: some Acts of Injustice, of which we see so many Instances, can never deserve such a Punishment; besides, Repentance effaces all,

I would now fain know of Mr. R—— in what consists the Disorder, which the System of a *Restoration* might occasion? I imagine some will look on the matter in a different light, and think it were to be wished that Men were brought to *Good* by a *well-grounded Fear*. That they would learn to cultivate in themselves the Sentiments of *Justice*, which are the Work of the *Creator*, and which alone can lead them to real *Justice*.

P O S T S C R I P T.

Allow me a Word or two on Mr. Professor's Conclusion.

“ I will venture to affirm, says he, that
 “ even though GOD had formed a Design
 “ of executing his Menāces of eternal Tor-
 “ ments with rigour, his *Wisdom* would have
 “ engaged him to keep such a Design secret.”

But he elsewhere tells us, that, “ if the
 “ *Justice* of GOD did not permit him to
 “ *punish* the Wicked with eternal Torments,
 “ his *Wisdom* would not have permitted him
 “ to threaten them with such Torments.”
 How is this to be reconciled?

Mr. R—— says likewise, “ that if GOD
 “ is pleased, notwithstanding his Menaces,
 “ to shew the Damned some Favour, it is a
 “ Mystery,

“Mystery, which he has revealed to no Man.” Here he supposes the very thing in question*. But in short what does Mr. R—— infer from this? the following Admonition, which is the Conclusion of his whole Work.

“I would not, says he, advise any Sinner to defer his Conversion ‘till his Death, much less till after his Death, and venture his Salvation on a *May-be*.” Was there any Necessity of writing a Book in order to come to this Conclusion? Or at least, was there any Necessity of confuting the Letters, in order to make his way to it? Do they advise the contrary? The Reader may judge of that.

If it appears that the Work confuted by Mr. R—— carries in it the same Conclusion†, more *naturally*, more *forcibly*, and more *incontestably*, one would be tempted to ask what can be the Tendency of || the Confutation before us.

A N S W E R to L E T T E R III.

S I R,

I Have read your last Letter, and shewn it Mr. R——. I was with him when he

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read

* This Mystery is revealed to those who find it both in the Language of Scripture and that of all Nature.

† And other Conclusions, of no less importance; see Letters sixth, thirteenth and fourteenth.

|| If Mr. R—— had concluded with demonstrating that the System of a *miserable Eternity* is more harmonious than that of a *Restoration*, more worthy of God, more advantageous to Mankind, better calculated for clearing up the Difficulties and Contradictions which divide Christians; such a Conclusion, I say, would have given more weight to his Confutation.

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read it; and observed that how desirous soever he might have been of justifying the Principles of Mr. R——, he knew not how to do it. He was obliged to say on more than one Occasion, *This is evident; this admits of no Reply.*

However, having spent a little time in thinking on it, he said the Author was indeed strong in Reasons and Demonstrations; but that this did not prove he had Truth on his side: that we ought not to presume our selves able to determine what would be *just* or *unjust* in the Conduct of GOD: that his *Ways* are not our *Ways*; that they are *incomprehensible* to finite Understandings; that we must lay our Hand on our Mouth at the sight of his Judgments; that St. Paul himself cries out, *O, the Depth!* In short, that it is sufficient for us to know GOD has decreed or determined a thing, for being assured it is just: that it becomes just by his ordaining it: that he was not obliged to give us an Account of his Conduct: that it is our business to obey, and not to attempt to penetrate into the Counsels of God.

I own that these Difficulties seemed to me so strong, that I had not one Word to say in answer; and, if I may be allowed to speak freely, I assure you, Sir, I am in some pain for you, and apprehend you will find it no easy matter to get over them.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

S I R,

YOU have indeed some reason to be in pain for me; I do not flatter myself with being able to give a full and compleat Answer to the Difficulties proposed by Mr. N——; this is an important Subject in Religion, and perhaps one of those which has been least explained.

Though there is something of the *True* in the Propositions before us, they occasion much of the *False*; or, at least, serve to colour it over. The Partizans of the opposite Sects make an equal use of them in their Disputes.

There is not one single Sect in which, to a certain point, Men will not lay down *Principles*, draw *Consequences*, prove what they advance, and oblige others to grant they have *Demonstration* on their side: but as soon as some Principle fit for disconcerting their *System* is offered, then recourse is had to the Maxims in question: they are very successfully employed for answering, that we ought to cry out, *O the Depth! lay your Hand on your Mouth: The Ways of God are not our Ways.*

In reality, nothing is more proper for commanding Silence; and this manner of speaking, at first sight, seems conclusive.

But as the same Maxims are equally used for maintaining both sides of the Question, there is reason to suppose they may be falsely applied; that these Propositions are in some particular Subjects applicable in an *absolute* sense and without restriction; that in some others, they may lead us into mistakes, if employed in the same manner.

Thus, might it not be concluded that there are some Subjects in Religion, in which we may and ought to require *Evidence*? as there are others with which we ought not to pretend to be thoroughly acquainted; and that by a just Distinction between one sort and the other, we shall find the most puzzling Difficulties vanish?

We are first to inquire, what are those *first Ideas*, and *certain Notions*, on which we may build, and which we can never call in question. Here, without doubt we are to expect *Evidence*, or, to express my self more properly, hence it ought to diffuse itself on all the *Consequences*, which would necessarily flow from it.

If, after this we should happen to meet with some Subjects, on which those first Ideas could not afford us any *positive* Instruction, we should leave in *Obscurity* whatever is not clearly unfolded, or surpasses our Understanding.

By *certain Notions* I mean such as are *Universal*; which are the same in *all* Men, though not equally unfolded in *all*. Men

Men are pretty well agreed on certain general Notions, when they are not concerned to defend the particular System they have espoused. Thus they will readily grant that the Deity being *self-sufficient*, could have had no other End in establishing Religion than the *Interest* of Mankind; that being pure *Goodness*, he can will only the Happiness of his Creatures: that being sovereign *Equity*, and consequently *impartial*, he cannot will the *Happiness* of some and the Misery of others: in short, that if he calls them all to Bliss on certain Conditions, he must provide them all with *Means* of performing them.

Chuse the most judicious Men out of all the Societies of the Christian World; they will not refuse to subscribe to these *general Notions*. They will agree that they are the Dictates of good Sense and of Truth itself.

Press them a little more closely; ask them whether the Revelation, which they unanimously admit, can be *contrary* to these *Notions*; or whether it ought to be conformable to them; they will answer, that it must be conformable to them.

Go still farther; make them observe the *Contradiction* between the *System* which they have embraced, and these *general Notions*. They will sooner renounce them, than suffer the least Violation of their System.

In this fixed Resolution they will forget what they had before granted; *viz.* that *Revelation ought to be conformable to these univer-*

sal Notions. Thence they will proceed to set the former in opposition to the latter, and soon give it the preference. Some particular *Terms*, which they have consecrated, as proper for the Support of their System, must be made decisive of the *True*.

I need not go very far for an Instance of this. The Sticklers for *absolute Predestination* have consecrated for their Use the Terms of *Election, Vocation, Reprobation, previous to any good or bad Action.*

Place the most *simple Notion* of the *infinite Goodness* and *perfect Equity*, which they have admitted, in opposition to the Sense they give their favourite Terms. No matter; we must here *draw the Curtain*, and cry out, *O, the Depth!* Our Notions of the *divine Equity* and *Impartiality* may deceive us; whereas the opposite Expressions are decisive. *Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated.* We must stop here, and remain on the Brink of the Abyfs.

The Votaries of the *Roman Church* are of the same stamp. The Terms which they have consecrated for their own Use, are the invariable Rule which determines the *True* and the *False, Salvation* and *Damnation.* All the Scripture says of the *Church*, is applicable only to their own: all it says of true Pastors, regards only their Doctors: the Elect are to be found only in their *Communion.* Confront this with the most simple Ideas of *universal Goodness*, and *sovereign Equity*, which cannot

cannot have *limited*, or attach'd Salvation to one *Seet* or *Party*; this is nothing to the purpose; *Here the Curtain is to be drawn: No Salvation out of the Church.* Here we must stop; the Maxim is undoubted.

The Generality of Christians, who have hitherto maintain'd the Eternity of Hell, have likewise taken some particular Expressions for the Rule of the *True*; such as *everlasting Fire, the Worm that dieth not.* These Expressions have been allow'd the Preference to the most simple Notions, not only of *Universal Goodness*, but even to that of *sovereign Justice*. In answer to this, tell them that the Idea of *Justice* and that of *Equity*, are but one and the same thing: that *Equity* requires a perfect *Equality*, or at least a full *Compensation*, an exact *Proportion* between the *Fault* and the *Punishment*: make them observe that an Infinity of Creatures culpable in some degree, such as *wild* and *barbarous* People, &c. cannot have deserved eternal Punishment. No matter. *Here the Curtain must be drawn*: the Expression of *everlasting Fire* is positive. We ought to adore the divine Justice in its Judgments, and not pretend to be wiser than GOD. Have not those Christians of different Countries, who have excluded all *Pagans, Jews, and Mahometans* from Salvation on this single Declaration, *There is no other Name given unto Men, whereby they may be saved*, made the most *simple*

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Ideas of *universal Goodness*, and that *sovereign Equity*, which will render to every Man according to his Works, and judge every Creature by the Use he has made of his Knowledge; have they not, I say, made them give way to some *Expressions*?

What are we to think of the Contradiction between these two ways of speaking? Which shall we consider as *true*? That by which Men *unanimously*, and without hesitation, assent to the *same Truths*; or that by which they prove *inconsistent* with themselves, for no other Reason, but the support of their own Systems, and without any other *Demonstration* than that equivocal Maxim, *We must lay our Hand on our Mouth, and not attempt to penetrate into the Decrees of God*?

These Examples make evident what I before advanced; that this Maxim, taken in a wrong Sense, gives those who make use of it room to settle and confirm themselves in the *False*. Let us agree, that it is much more easy to perceive the *false Applications* made of it, than exactly distinguish the *true Use* of it. This is the nice and difficult Point.

Let us here recollect the *evident* Maxims on which we have said all Men are agreed, when not on their guard. It is necessary to enumerate them once more.

First, That the Deity, being *self-sufficient*, could have no other *End* in establishing Religion,

Religion, than the *Interest* of Mankind.

Secondly, That, being pure *Goodness*, he can will only the *Happiness* of his Creatures.

Thirdly, That, being *sovereign Equity*, and consequently *impartial*, he cannot will the *Happiness* of some, and the *Misery* of others.

Lastly, That if he calls them *all* to *Happiness*, on certain Conditions, he must provide *all* with Means to perform them.

These Propositions are grounded on the Idea we conceive of the Divine *Goodness* and *Equity*. Must the Curtain be drawn over these? Must we cry out, O the *Depth*! and add, that it is not our business to judge here of the Equity of GOD? Are we sensible what would be the Consequence of all this? There would then be nothing certain, either in *Religion* or civil *Society*. If Men do not find the Rule of the *Just* within themselves, they will never be able to agree on any thing; they will have no *fixt* Principle to build on. This being supposed, the whole *Foundation* of the Security of States and Families will be destroyed: the *Laws*, which are essentially founded on the same *Ideas*, will lose their *Force*. What a strange *Chaos* would be the Consequence of this!

If we really find within ourselves the *Idea* of the *Just*, of whom do we hold it? Is it our own Work? If so, unjust Men would not find it within themselves. It is there how-

ever; and as soon as they vouchsafe to consult it, they find it as a Rule which corrects them.

But, in short, can we doubt that GOD is at the same time the *Original* and the *Cause* of the *Just* *? If he has been pleased to make himself known to Men by it, ought we to silence the Testimony, which it bears of itself, with this equivocal Maxim, That *the ways of GOD are not our ways: that we are not to set bounds to his supreme Justice?* &c.

But here comes an Objection. Is not GOD *incomprehensible*, purely because he is *infinite*?

I answer, that the Understanding of Man, though limited, has an Idea of the *Infinite negatively*. This Idea is *simple*; and though it infinitely surpasses his Understanding, he has a *Certainty* of it. The same is to be said of the Idea of *Eternity*, &c. Whence doth Man, born but the other day, derive the Idea of Eternity? he can hold it only of the *eternal Being*. These Ideas, so far as they are *negative*, may be called *Notions*. Whatever Name is bestow'd on them, they are not therefore less *real*: they are a sufficient Demonstration that the Understanding of
Man,

* Man finds in himself Ideas which represent Perfections, of which he is not Master. He has an Idea of *infinite Goodness*, or *perfect Equity*. He himself is neither *good* nor *equitable*. Every Perfection of which he has an *Idea* only without the *Reality*, must reside in the Author of his Being.

Man, though *bounded*, entertains Ideas, which *surpass* it, and which ought to make him go back to him who is the Original of them.

To come now to the Idea of *Equity*: I say it is rather *negative* than *positive* *. The Term *Just* literally denotes neither *too much* nor *too little*: those of *Equity*, *Equality*, and *Proportion*, all stand for one and the same thing. It is evident therefore, that the *Equity* of GOD is one of the Attributes, which we most easily conceive †: that even what is *infinite* in it ‖, doth not exceed our Understanding.

The

* We have more exact Ideas of what is *unjust*, than of what is *just* in the *positive* Sense. We may, with more certainty, affirm that such or such a thing is *not just*, than we can precisely distinguish what *Justice* requires. When a Tradesman or Artificer has employed his time and labour in serving a Man of Fortune, without receiving any Recompence, we readily pronounce that this is not just. Were we to determine the *Degree* of the Recompence he deserves, we could not judge of the matter with so much Certainty.

† It was necessary that Men should have more exact Ideas of the divine *Equity* than of the other Attributes of GOD; because that Idea is the true Foundation of Order. The Idea of *Equity* is stamp'd on all Men in so *ineffaceable* a manner, that it alone has an *unexceptionable* Authority over them. When Children complain of their Parents, Servants of their Masters, Subjects of their Prince; this is always done under pretence that they are not equitable.

‖ The Term *infinite*, join'd to that of *Equity*, makes no addition to it. It is even improper. We say *infinite Goodness*, *infinite Wisdom*: we say *perfect Equity*, and the word *perfect* in this respect, signifies only the *Perfection of Equality*.

The Idea of *Goodness* is at the same time both *positive* and *simple*; consequently it is *invariable*. It is not in our power to doubt that the first Being is *Good*; we find in ourselves the Idea of a *Goodness*, of which we are not possessed; this Idea again refers us to the Original.

It is now time to speak of the Idea of *Wisdom*. Is it *positive* or *negative*? I answer, that it is partly both; but that Men can know it only by its *Negative* *. In that respect, they have an Idea of a *Wisdom*, which *cannot miscarry*, which foresees all things, and employs an *infinite* diversity of Means for attaining its *End*. Will they attempt to take a nearer view of it, all they *comprehend* of it is, that it is *incomprehensible*; or if they are rash enough to pretend to *penetrate* into what is beyond their *Sphere*, instead of finding *Evidence*, they meet with nothing but *Chimæra's*, which are the effect of their own Invention.

Here

* The Question doth not here turn on the *Wisdom*, which appears in the Works of *Nature*; that is *clearly seen*, as St. Paul expresses it, *Rom. i. 20.* and though Men are unacquainted with the *Springs* of it in several respects, they know enough of it to make it the Subject of their Admiration. We are now speaking of that *Wisdom* which governs Mankind; a *Wisdom* which St. Paul calls *hidden*; which for arriving at its *Ends*, takes ways *unknown* to Men; which *disguises* itself from their Eyes so much, that they take it for *Folly*. St. Paul speaking of this *Wisdom*, says, that the *Princes of this World have not known it*; for if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.

Here the Maxim, That *the ways of GOD are not our ways*, is perfectly in its place. *The Curtain must be drawn over the incomprehensible Springs*, which it puts into motion, and of which we know not the *particular Design*. Here we are to cry out, O, *the Depth!* Accordingly St. Paul's Exclamation is made on a Subject of this nature. He had, through that whole Chapter, been speaking of the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*: he had insinuated that the former were rejected only for a time: He had even declared, as a *Mystery*, that all *Israel shall be saved*. After which, considering within himself the *infinite Springs*, which the divine Wisdom must employ in the execution of that vast Design, he cries out, O, *the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of GOD! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!* Rom. xi. 33.

He had said, in the foregoing Verse, *GOD hath concluded them all in Unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all*. 'Tis a design so great as this, that made the subject of his Admiration; what he calls *unsearchable*, or *incomprehensible*, are the different ways employ'd by *Wisdom* for putting it in execution. He insinuates that on seeing it *act*, no Man would suspect the *End* it proposes; *Who hath known the Mind of the Lord*, saith he,

or who hath been his Connfellow? v. 34. For,* adds he, in the last Verfe, by way of Conclusion, *of him and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be Glory for ever.*

Here I meet with fresh Proofs of a *Restoration* in my way; Proofs which I had not before in my thoughts. Doth this Conclusion, after what precedes it, leave us any doubt of GOD's design on all Men?

Before we can be persuaded that all *Men* will not return to their *Origin*, it must be proved that *all Men* did not derive their *Existence* from GOD; that they do not subsist *in him*. So too, before we can be persuaded that *all Men* will not at last obtain *Mercy*, it ought to be proved that all Men were not *concluded in Unbelief*.

You will be pleased to observe, Sir, that St. *Paul's* Exclamation, which Mr. N— presses against the System of a *Restoration*, is the same that brings me back to it. I doubt whether his Objections will appear to carry any great Force in them, after what I have here said.

If

* In reality, Men of the same temper with those of former times (I speak chiefly of the *Jews*) and the majority of the Christians at present, would have been far from giving such Counsel. The *Jews* thought themselves highly *injured* when *ranked* with the *Gentiles*. Such an Association would have appeared to them the greatest Offence that could be committed against them. The Christians of our Days are *scandalized*, when they are told that *all Men* are destined to be one day Partakers of the *same Happiness*.

If we ought not to presume ourselves able to determine what would be *just* or *unjust* in the Conduct of GOD, this concerns only the *Detail* of his Conduct, the *particular* Ends of which we know not; and this is comprehended in the means employ'd by infinite Wisdom.

But as to the *general* Ends proposed by the Deity, which must be grounded on perfect *Goodness* and *perfect* *Equity*, we may, without being guilty of too much Presumption, judge whether they are *just* or not. GOD himself invites us to make, this Judgment.

He refers us to the *Rule* which he has fixed in us, for judging of the Equity of his ways. *Ezek. xviii. 25, 29.* So far is he from stopping Men's mouths, when his Equity is to be defended, that he pleads his Cause before them. *Micah vi. 1, 2.* He knows *he shall be justified.* *Rom. iii. 4.*

Mr. N—— supposes a thing becomes just because GOD ordains it. Perhaps he has not well expressed his meaning. I think it might rather be said, that *he ordains it because it is just.* Otherwise, what can be the meaning of all the repeated Testimonies which *David, Moses,* and other Prophets bear of GOD, when they say *his Laws are just*; that they are *established on Equity*? Do not these Expressions suppose that the *Just* and the *Equitable* subsist independent of his Laws*? That
Men

* If it be allowed that no Man doubts of it, I desire no more; since the Supposition that *we cannot judge* what would be just or unjust in GOD, is grounded only on that Doubt.

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Men have an Idea of them, and that they bear this Testimony of his *Laws* by the relation they find between them and that *Idea*. This *Idea* is as the *Original* in their Minds; the *Laws* are only a *Representation* of it.

I think it would be superfluous to enlarge any more on this Subject; it is fertile in Consequences; and I leave you and Mr. N—— the pleasure of deducing them more at large.

ANSWER to LETTER IV.

S I R,

MR. N—— and I have read your Answer to his Difficulties. He seems to me satisfied with it; and desires I will let you know he has no farther Objections to offer, at least to the *Enquiry into Origenism*; that is, he is of opinion that you have entirely confuted it.

However, he is not inclined to let you come off so. He finds you have laid down some Principles, the Consequences of which might deserve an Explanation. According to him, you have been too short on the Article of *Wisdom*. He maintains that you ought to have added two or three Pages to your Letter; and that you have not sufficiently inquired into the Causes which render the ways of Wisdom *impenetrable*, while there is nothing in divine *Goodness* and *Equity*, that surpasses our Understanding.

Here,

L E T T E R V. 259

Here, Sir, is Work cut out for you. If there is any Indiscretion in the Demand, I hope you will not make me answerable for it. I must own, however, that I am not displeased at Mr. N——'s being indiscreet; and perhaps, had he not been so, I should have ventured incurring your Censure on that score, rather than not engage you to give an Answer.

L E T T E R V.

S I R,

I Should have thought it an Injustice to your Penetration, as well as to that of Mr. N——, to unfold the Consequences of the Principles I have laid down. I know not whether it may not be more difficult for me to do it in writing, than for you to see them at one view. I find my self but little disposed to attempt it; and therefore beg leave, by way of relaxation, to communicate to you a little Scene of which I have been Witness this day.

I went to Mr. N——'s a famous Watch-maker of this City, in order to purchase a Watch. He was not at home; but I was told he would return very soon. I resolved to wait for him; and as I was walking in his Shop, I look'd on several Pendulum Clocks, and other Pieces of his making. His little Family and some neighbouring Children were diverting themselves with striking the Clocks, and Repeating—

peating-Watches; whereupon I undertook to ask them some little Questions, that I might hear them prattle.

I first ask'd them the names of those several Machines. To which they all replied at once, they were Clocks and Watches. What is the use of them, said I? They immediately told me, to shew the Hours. But, asked I, what is the use of that striking? The eldest of them answer'd, it was that People might know how the time pass'd in the Night. I farther inquired of those last mentioned, what was the use of the little Machine that hung at the end of the Chain. That is the *Key*, replied they; for winding it up every day at the same hour. Here, said I, are Children, who will soon know as much of the matter as their Father. They had no difficulty in believing me.

I then asked them whether they were acquainted with the use of several little Machines scatter'd on a Table. They boldly assured me they were; but when I attempted to press them a little farther on the particular use of each of those Machines, the Scene became diverting. Each of them told his Opinion, and began to support it with warmth. One would have it, that the Chain was a Necklace for his Baby: another, that one of the Wheels was made for his little Coach where it was wanting; in short, the smallest Machine on the Table found a place in the Brain of these Children, according to their different Inclinations.

The

The Dispute grew serious and warm; the Father came in, and put an end to it; neither of them gained his point, as he pretended. To conclude the whole affair, they were told they ought to be satisfied, till a certain age, with knowing what hour it is by a Watch, without troubling themselves about the Springs which put it in motion.

This Scene furnished me with matter for Reflection. I consider'd it as a pretty strong Emblem of what we have hitherto seen in regard to Religion. It made me recollect the Subject of my last Letter: and I even think it might suggest something in answer to Mr. N—'s last Difficulty.

He asks, why Men have more *certain* Ideas concerning the *general Ends* proposed by the Deity, than of the *Springs*, which *Wisdom* employs for attaining those *Ends*.

The Scene of the Clocks will give us some light into the affair. It appear'd that the Children, who acted in it, entertain'd just Ideas of the *general Design* of their Father's Works: They readily and unanimously answer'd the Questions relating to that only: Their Reply concerning the Use to be made of those Works was likewise very just. But, when they came to consider the little Machines, which are as it were the *Soul* of the *Clocks*, separately from the *Clocks* themselves; they did not comprehend what relation those different Machines might bear to a Clock. Being
accustomed

accustomed to see only the *Outside* or Surface of Clocks and Watches, their little Brains could not conceive the use of so many *hidden Springs*. They immediately look'd for such uses of them as were most within their reach, and most material to them: nothing concerning them more than their Toys and Playthings, each of them pitched on that Piece which was proper for his little Manufacture. Such as could not be converted to the same Use, were despised as so many useless Pieces, as so much Trumpery.

I lately observed to you, that Men are agreed on *simple* and *universal* Notions: that they are unanimous in their Answer concerning their Idea of the *supreme Goodness* and *Equity*: That they are divided only on the *Detail*, and the *fix'd* Resolution they have formed of adapting it to their own *particular Systems*.

Two Causes may be assigned for their Division: Their *Ignorance* of the *secret Springs*, which exceed their Understanding; and the *Resolution* of making use of them at any rate, for the support of the Opinions of their *Party*. While these two *Causes* subsist, how is it possible to reconcile Men? *Ignorance* alone would throw no Obstacle in the way; but *Ignorance* join'd to a *Presumption* of comprehending every thing, forms the most invincible Obstacle.

I should here be tempted to advance this Proposition; *viz.* That the generality of Christians have employ'd their whole Application in attempting to comprehend this *Detail* of things of which they ought to be *ignorant*, or which they ought to leave in *suspense*; while they have neglected such as they ought to *know*, or at least, have not taken care to *know them as they ought*, to know them by *Sentiment* and the force of *Evidence*.

All Men have within themselves the true Principles of Religion. These are those *first Ideas*, those *universal Notions*, mention'd in my fourth Letter. *Revelation* was not given with a view of rendering these first Notions useless; much less with that of contradicting them. Its Design was to refer Men to them, and explain them.

Had Christians made this use of Revelation; had they stopped at what it teaches, in conformity with these *Notions*; could they have resolved to be ignorant of the *Detail* of an Infinity of things, or at least have left in *suspense* what is not clearly unfolded; what Rocks would they not have avoided?

The great Ends proposed by the Deity in regard to Mankind are very *simple*, and consequently within the reach of human Understanding. But the ways taken by his *Wisdom* for attaining to those Ends, are *infinitely various**, and thus become impenetrable to a *limited*

* St. Paul calls it a Wisdom *various* in every Way. The Diversity of the Ways of *Wisdom* has been shewn by

imited Mind. They are the *Thoughts* of GOD, raised as far above the *Thoughts* of Men, as *infinite* is above *finite*.

A Child or a Peasant knows the Sun is made for giving Light; but they know not *how* it enlightens. They know the Eye is made for seeing, but are ignorant of the *secret Structure* of that Organ, which renders it capable of seeing. How many things are there, of whose Existence we cannot doubt, though it is not possible for us to explain the *How*?

A Child may comprehend his Father's *Design* in his greatest Undertakings; whether he proposes to build a City, to enrich it, or establish Laws to the advantage of all its Inhabitants. How important soever the Design may be, the Idea of it is *simple* enough, and

by the different Forms it has assumed in the different Oeconomies.

In the Oeconomy of Nature, it made itself known by *Nature* itself.

In the second Oeconomy, it was disguised, so as hardly to be known, by an Infinity of *Laws*, *foreign* to human Nature, and much more so by Orders seemingly *unjust*; but it was supported by so glorious an Authority, by so invincible a Power and Force, that Men in those times could not but see the *Finger* of GOD.

Under the Oeconomy of the Gospel, it took the contrary Form, or rather, appear'd without *Form*, without *Grandeur*, without *Splendor*, without *Power*, without *Authority*. It permitted its Children to sink under the violence of Persecution. This is what St. Paul terms the *Foolishness* of GOD, the *Weakness* of GOD; 1 Cor. i. 25. Could *Wisdom* be more effectually disguised than under the Appearance of *Folly*?

and contains nothing but what a Child may conceive.

The Case is not the same in regard to the Execution of it. That includes so great a *Diversity of Means*, requires a Foresight and a Wisdom so fertile in *Expedients* and *Contrivances*, that the Child can entertain no Idea of it. The Measures, which he sees his Father take, are so many Riddles to him; he is quite bewilder'd by those which unite in putting several *Springs* in motion at once.

What particularly renders the ways of divine Wisdom impenetrable, is, that it frequently seems to turn its back on its *End*; and yet that is the very way it *reaches* it. The sacred History furnishes us with Examples of this kind.

The History of *Joseph* is one. I shall suppose that during his Infancy, GOD had reveal'd to him his *Design*, the *End* he proposed of making this Child the Deliverer of his Family. I suppose, I say, that GOD made mention only of his *End*, and not of the Ways he would take for leading him to it. I farther suppose, some particular Man, desirous of seeing all that should happen to *Joseph*; that with that view he should undertake to follow him through all the Revolutions of his Life. He first observes the Hatred his Brethren bear him; his Father's Tenderness seems a Counterpoise to that. The Dreams, which he hears him relate, and which foretel his

Promotion, confirm him in the Opinion that it will infallibly come to pass. And yet those very *Dreams* increase the Hatred of his Brethren, and put them on selling him. Here our Man is bewilder'd.

He follows *Joseph* into *Egypt*, he accompanies him to *Potiphar's* House. *Joseph's* Success in his Master's Family begins to afford him some hope: which entirely vanishes, when he sees him accused of a heinous Crime and imprisoned. What steps are here towards his becoming a *Deliverer*, and a *Deliverer of his Family*! It seems lost to him, as he is to it: the time passes on, his Fortune continues the same. The Interpretation of the Dreams of two of *Pharaoh's* Servants, which seemed to tend to a Change in his favour, leaves him still two Years in Prison. At last, *Pharaoh's* Dreams begin to open a new Scene. *Joseph* becomes the Deliverer of a Kingdom; but the main point is wanting. He still continues lost to his Family: he hears no news of them in eight Years after his Promotion: and his Father has now mourned for him nineteen.

Jacob on the point of his greatest Joy, finds his Afflictions doubled. The Famine is a Trifle to him: he is in danger of being deprived of Children: his dear *Benjamin* is taken from him, he has nothing to do but die; and yet at that critical Moment, he passes from the bitterest Grief to the greatest Joy he had ever known in his Life.

Had

Had we been Spectators of such a Series of Revolutions during the course of nineteen Years, should we not often have lost all hope? Would not *Means* so *contrary* to such an *End*, have puzzled and confounded us? Now we have seen the *End*, it is easy for us to admire the *Ways* of Wisdom, which knows how to arrive at its Ends by *Contraries* and *Opposites*. We are forced to own that these thorny Roads lead to a greater Happiness: and that *Goodness* for that reason allows us to travel through them. It appears then in this Case that *Goodness* and *Wisdom* concurred. But did *Justice* act in concert with them? What *Injustice* did it not permit? An innocent Person imprisoned like a Criminal! But wait the Event: *Justice* will not lose its right; it will more than *compensate* all the Sufferings of the Innocent, with a *Glory* which he had never acquired without these *Sufferings*. It will bring the *Agents* of *Injustice* to his Feet: it will make them feel the *Retribution* of their Violence by grievous Remorse; in short, they shall owe their Lives to him whom they would have killed. Can a more complete Compensation be imagined?

This Account is satisfactory in the whole. It justifies the Divine *Goodness*, *Justice* and *Wisdom*; and were we to be only bare Spectators of such a Scene, it wou'd be easy to admire it. But there are long Periods in Life, in which we find nothing but *Contrarieties*,

without preceiving the *End* of them; and in such Case it is not easy to be willing to depend on a *Wisdom*, which we should be tempted not to acknowledge.

What this and such like Histories * represent to the View *in little*, is what happens at *full length*, and the *End* of it is reserved for the World to come.

For the same reason, there are an Infinity of Particulars in the Conduct of Providence, which *to us appear unjust*. The greatest part of the Events related in the Scripture †, do not justify it. Profane History presents us with Tragical Spectacles, which give room for doubting whether the Deity regards what passes among Men. Nor does the sacred History furnish us with Difficulties less considerable. So many *Massacres* of whole Nations, not only permitted, but commanded by

* The History of *Moses*, those of *David*, *Job*, *Ester* and *Daniel*, have in the whole some resemblance with that of *Joseph*. They are so many Pictures, or rather rough Draughts of the ways of the same *Wisdom*. All these were conducted to Happiness, through Roads which they wou'd never have chosen, and which on the contrary seem'd to carry them from it.

† The whole History of the Old Testament is full of such Events. We cannot, without Astonishment, observe the unheard-of Severity, exercised by the *Israelites*, by the Command of GOD, on all the *Canaanites* without exception; as also several others, where the Children are punished with their Fathers, Subjects with their Prince; where GOD calls one Generation to an account for what passed in the foregoing Age.

by Divine Wisdom! How shall we reconcile this with the Idea of Equity? Were it allowable to quote a Passage from *Esop*, it might stand for an Answer to this Question: *In all things the End is to be considered.*

The *End* will *unravel* all, and what has in this Life appear'd to us most contrary to the supreme *Wisdom* and *Equity*, will be the subject of Admiration to intelligent Beings. We are not to judge of the *Cause* by *equivocal Effects*, of which we know not the *particular End*, but of the *Effects* by the *Cause* itself, of which we know the *general Design*.

This is the only Consideration, that can make us satisfied with so many Events, in all appearance unjust. This *general End* proposed by the Divinity, this *absolute Design* of bringing all Men to Happiness at last, is sufficient for making us easy; and though we cou'd not conceive the Connexion which such or such Effects may have with the *general End*, it matters not; without comprehending them distinctly, we in the main conceive that *impenetrable Wisdom* can never lose sight of its *End*; and that what seems most *contrary* to the *End* proposed, helps to promote it.

Here now is the *fixed Point*, on which we may depend, and in which all terminates. This *Point of View* once removed, every thing falls to the ground: we have no longer any *certain Principle*: we lose the *Idea* of

the *perfect Being**; every thing appears to us a Dream. For, in short, whatever efforts of Imagination we may make, will it be possible for us to think Events like those just mentioned, equitable, if we consider them separately from the *general Design* of the Deity to make all Mankind *happy*?

The Sticklers for the old System, pretend to justify the Equity of GOD several ways. They tell us in loose Terms, that GOD will justify his *Wisdom*, and *Equity*, by a perfect *Compensation*. - When they are pressed concerning this *Compensation*, when they are asked what this *unravelling* will be; they say, GOD *will be glorified by his Justice in the Damnation of the Wicked, as he will by his Mercy in the Salvation of the Good.*

Is such an *unravelling* sufficient for solving all the Difficulties, which present themselves concerning the Conduct of Providence? 'Tis certain that it is not in every Man's power to be satisfied with it, and that such *Solutions* are so far from making the Testimony of Scripture venerable, that they have produced the contrary Effect on several; on such, I mean, as require at least some *sort of Evidence*, something fixed, on which they may depend. Ought

* If we cannot depend on it, as on an undoubted Principle, that there is neither *Rage* nor *Cruelty* in GOD; that what to us seems so in his Conduct, will terminate at last in the Happiness of those Creatures, who have felt the Severity of them, what Idea shall we have of the *perfect Being*?

Ought this Disposition to be charged with *Irreligion* and *Rashness*? I think not. But it may be said, there are several things in Religion for which we are not to require *Evidence*. I am of the same Opinion; this very Persuasion engages me to demand it in things which may be susceptible of it.

If I have no Evidence concerning the *essential Attributes* of the Deity; how can I have any concerning the *Divinity of the Scripture*? and, if I have no *Certainty* that it is *Divine*, what obliges me to receive its Decisions without *Evidence*? Shall I hold it to be Divine on the Testimony of Men? No, it may be answer'd; you shall know it to be such by the *Divine Characteristics*, by the *grand Ideas* it gives you of the *Justice* and *Wisdom* of the perfect Being. Very well; on that foot, I ought to have the Idea of *Divine** before the Scripture imprints the Character of it in my Mind. In like manner, I have an Idea of the *Goodness*, *Justice* and *Wisdom* of the perfect Being, since I am obliged to assent to what the same Scripture says of them. This is the *Evidence* I require. Is there any rashness in demanding an Evidence of this nature? If I am obliged to believe what GOD says, without a complete Evidence, I must at least be first assured that GOD has said it. In this Case, I shall have some sort of Evidence,

M 4

on

* We can know a Man by his *Picture*, only from the *Idea*, we before had of him.

on which I may depend ; I shall judge of the *Uncertain* by the *Certain*.

But it may be said, it is not enough to *know* that GOD has *said* such or such a thing, we ought likewise to *know* in what *Sense* he has said it. Is not this kind of Evidence as necessary as the former? I think not. To pretend to have *Evidence* for *all sorts of things*, is the way to destroy the *true* one, that which ought to serve as the *Basis* of our *Judgments*.

If I do really know the Scripture to be Divine by the *Divine Characteristics* *, I shall consider only what relates to those *Characteristics*, as *evident Truths*.

When it *seems* to speak a contratry Language, I shall take it for granted, that the *Certain* cannot be shaken by the *Uncertain*; that ambiguous Expressions cannot obscure Evidence; and, without giving myself any Concern for determining the *Meaning* of such Expressions,

* Nothing is plainer than this. It is natural that the Rule by which I know the Scripture to be *Divine*, should be the same, which serves to give me the *Meaning* of it. I know the Scripture to be *Divine*, by *Divine Characteristics*. Therefore, I will not ascribe to it any Sense contrary to those *Divine Characteristics*. For Example; The Scripture says, GOD *wills not that any one should perish, but that all should come to Repentance*. It says, GOD *hardens whom he will harden: It is impossible that those, who have been illuminated, should be renewed by Repentance*.

Here now are two contradictory Propositions. I ask which of them bears a *Divine Character*?

Expressions, it will be sufficient for me to know, what they *do not signify* *.

I will make use of the same Rule in all manner of Subjects, in proportion as they have more or less Evidence.

I will content myself with seeing those things in a *general* manner, whose *Particularities* I cannot discover. I will resolve to be *ignorant* of what seems to me *impenetrable*. I will attend less to the *Detail* and *Circumstances* than to the *Substance* of things; and without being surpris'd at seeming Contradictions, which certainly lie only in the Terms, I will fix my Eyes on the *general Design*, which never *varies*.

Do not the Divisions among Christians arise from their having taken the contrary Method? Had they been content with an Evidence of this kind, how many Controversies would have been avoided? For, in short, they are grounded on *Expressions*, on Men's pretending to determine in what sense G O D hath said such or such a thing †.

M 5.

H.

* For Example;

The Scripture says, *The Lord revengeth and is furious*, Nahum i. 2. It says elsewhere, *Fury is not in me*, Isaiah xxvii. 4.

Which of these two Propositions, taken literally, bears a *Divine Character*? What then; you will say, can these contradictory Propositions signify? It is sufficient for me to know what they *do not signify*.

† JESUS CHRIST said, *This is my Body*. Here then is Transubstantiation.

He

274 *Answer to* L E T T E R V.

I find, Sir, that your Objections, or those of Mr. N——, have insensibly led me farther than I designed to go. I am persuaded, it will not now be necessary to beg you wou'd both think, I have discharged the Task imposed on me. If I have not sufficiently explain'd the Subject proposed by Mr. N——, I leave you that Employment. Besides, there are some Truths here, of which it is more easy to perceive the Force, than to enumerate them as one ought.

The Answer to the Fifth L E T T E R.

S I R,

MR. N—— and I allow it is just you should be discharged. Your last Letter gives a wide scope for Thought. You are troubled with this on account of a small Curiosity which has seized us both.

The Letter concerning a *Deist*, which appears at the end of the Fourteen Letters, mentions a Conversation, which preceded it; but that is all it says of the matter. I think I have heard

He said, *Thou art Peter, and on this Rock, &c.* Therefore the Pope is Head of the Church.

The Scripture says, *That GOD makes some Vessels to Honour, and others to Dishonour.*

Here then are absolute Election and Reprobation. It says, *There is no Name, but that of JESUS CHRIST, by which Men can be saved.* Therefore, all *Pagans, Jews and Mahometans* are damned, and damned eternally; for it is likewise said, *That the Fire of Hell shall not be extinguished.*

L E T T E R VI. 275

heard you say, you have seen an Account of it. If it is still in your hands, I flatter myself that you will be pleased to send it us. It is to be hoped, this will be the last Trouble we shall give you.

L E T T E R VI.

S I R,

IN Consideration of the Promise you make me, and which I beg you will remember; I send you the Account you desire, which, as you will see, employs two Letters. Several Persons have seem'd to wish they had been published with the other Letter concerning the *Deist*. That wou'd have been natural, as these were written first.

Some, perhaps, will be of opinion that these Letters, which are in the historical way, wou'd have been foreign to the Work; whereas that, which has appear'd at the end of it, is a sort of *Analysis*, which is so far from carrying the Reader from the Subject, that it collects the whole System, as it were, into one Point. Whatever becomes of this Question, I am assured you will thank me for the Copies I send you; and that after you have perused these Letters, you will have a fresh Pleasure in giving the other a second Reading, as it contains the Solution of the Difficulties proposed in these.

An Account of a Conversation with a
D E I S T.

L E T T E R I.

S I R,

I Was the other day in Company, where I chanced to meet with a Gentleman till then unknown to me, who seem'd to be a Foreigner. I understood by his discourse that he had been a great Traveller. The several Questions asked him concerning his Travels, gave him occasion to talk pretty much; but no one could find out what Religion he professed. One of the Gentlemen had the Curiosity to ask him. I am, said he, an *honest Man*; my Travels have disabused me of all other Religion. You are to know, by the way, that the Company was compos'd partly of *Roman Catholics*, and partly of *Protestants*. Both were equally surpriz'd at this Answer. It even occasion'd silence for some moments; no-body was willing to be the first that called on him to explain himself. An *Officer* told him with a low Voice, that he might have kept his Thoughts to himself; that such a Declaration gave several Persons room for entertaining disadvantageous Ideas of him. I think, answer'd he, that every honest Man may be allow'd to say what he thinks, and appear what he really is. I have no great Esteem

Esteem for those *hidden* Gentlemen, whose real Sentiments it is impossible to know.

This bold manner of delivering himself inspired the rest of the Company with Courage. Are you, says an *Abbot*, one of those whom we call *Atheists*? No, answers the Stranger, I acknowledge a *Deity*. You are a *Deist* then, replied the *Abbot*. A *Deist*, if you please, says the Stranger. I am come to that, after having carefully inquired into all the Religions in the World.

How! replied an *Abbot*; did the Christian Religion appear unworthy of your Choice? But, says the Stranger, where shall I find it? A pretty Question! replies the *Abbot*; doth not the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Religion bear all the Marks of it? Hold there, Sir, says a *Protestant*; those Marks belong to the Reformed Religion: It is entirely founded on the Holy Scripture. What Heresy! replied the *Abbot*; the Holy Scripture entirely on your side! It seems to favour you, only as you wrest it to serve your Turn. A *Lawyer*, who was present, asked the Stranger, whether he admitted of the Testimony of Scripture. What is the Scripture, says our Traveller? What sort of Language doth it speak? One assures me it says *White*, where others maintain it says *Black**. Which of them must I believe?

* This is the common Language of the *Deists*. The Contradictions, which they find between the different Opinions among Christians, embolden them to declare against.

believe? This Contradiction at last opened my Eyes. I concluded that the Case is the same in regard to the Scripture, as it is in regard to the Sound of Bells; each Man makes it speak what he thinks proper. Since the Gentleman sets no value on the Authority of Scripture, replied the *Lawyer*, it wou'd be in vain to urge it against him; I think the shortest way wou'd be to end the Dispute here.

Every one was not of his opinion. They ought not to let slip an Opportunity of converting an *Infidel*, a *Deist*; but the difficulty was, to find some competent Authority. That of Scripture was not such; some other must be thought of. This seem'd impossible; so that they were reduced to the necessity of giving up the Project, and leaving the *Deist* to himself.

This Scene occasion'd the following.

The *Deist* having taken his leave, the Company took full liberty with his Character. They bewail'd the misery of the times, in which Irreligion dares appear openly, and barefaced. In return to this, the *Officer* observ'd, that if Irreligion is to be fear'd, 'tis that which several Persons conceal under the Character of a Christian, much rather than that of a Man, who has the Courage to pass for a *Deist*, and thus gives every one an Opportunity of being on his guard: that Sentiments, *secretly insinuated* by Men, of whom we have no mistrust,

against the Scripture. They do not observe, that the Scripture is only the *Occasion*, not the *Cause* of such *Contradictions*.

trust, more certainly produce their Effect, than such as are *openly* declared. That, at least, it is a piece of Honesty not to attempt to deceive others. Some were of his opinion; and the *Lawyer*, among others, seconded him.

It was then inquired, what Method was to be taken for converting Persons of this Class. One was for beginning with proving the *Divinity* of the Scripture. Very well, says the *Lawyer*; when that is performed, shall we have made much progress in the Work? The difficulty will still be to determine the *Sense* of it. If this is not done, the *Deist* will reason thus :

I grant, says he, that the Scripture is *Divine*; that, consequently, it has some *Divine Sense*. Have you found this *Sense*? If you have, it ought to *reconcile* and *unite* you. If you have not, what use can you make of the *Divinity* of a *Book*, while you are ignorant of the *Sense* of it*?

Some of the Company flew into a Passion at this Discourse. They began to suspect both the *Lawyer* and the *Officer*; and after a pretty long Dispute, they parted with mutual Dissatisfaction.

What

* In reality, doubting of the Divinity of the Scripture is not what divides Christian Societies; all unanimously acknowledge this. The *opposite Senses*, which they imagine they find in it, is the only Source of their Contests; and those *opposite Senses*, are what serve the *Deists* as a *Pretext* for rejecting all use of the Scripture itself.

What had passed gave me room for Reflection. I shall not at present tell you every particular, that offer'd itself to my Mind, concerning the *Chaos* or Confusion which reigns among Christians. I chuse rather to communicate to you a Conversation I had the next day with the *Deist*, whom I met by chance.

I laid hold of this Opportunity to engage him to explain himself thoroughly. He answer'd my Questions with abundance of Frankness. Among other things, he told me that the too great Care he had taken to discover which among all the Christian Religions is the *true one* *, was the Cause of his being actually without Religion; or, at least, of his being reduced to *Natural Religion*.

I desired he wou'd let me know what had most contributed towards fixing him there? It was, says he, the *Contradiction* I found in all Christian Societies, not only the Division which separates them into so many *opposite Bodies*; but the Division of each *Society* within itself into *Parties*, which it is impossible to reconcile.

Those who hold *Predestination*, and those who maintain *Universal Grace*, mutually charge each other with overthrowing the sound Doctrine, and wresting the Scripture; while each

Party

* When a Man sets out on some Principle, *without Foundation*, he is infallibly led into *false Consequences*. The *Deist* supposes one Society of Christians ought to be *the only true one*, exclusive of all others. After all his Enquiries, he cannot meet with what he seeks for. Hence he concludes that *the true is no where to be found*.

Party pretends to have found the true Sense of it.

If we believe the former, according to their Interpretation of Scripture, the Deity will be *partial*: will have destined an infinitely larger number of his Creatures to *eternal Torments*, than to Happiness: He will punish those unhappy Creatures for Crimes which they could not avoid. If we may credit the latter, the Deity *would* the Salvation of all Men, he employs every thing in his power for producing that Effect; but *cannot* perform it. After all the Care he has taken, the number of miserable Creatures will be infinitely greater than that of the happy.

Thus far the two Parties are agreed; they are divided only on the *Cause* of so terrible an Effect.

The first place it in the *positive Will* of GOD, who, say they, has a right to form *Vessels for Perdition*. The second attribute it to a sort of *Impotency*: the Deity miscarries in the Designs he has formed for the Happiness of his Creatures. At this rate what sort of a Deity would that of the Christians be? If the *Idea* of GOD is really the *Basis* of Religion, what sort of Religion must it be that is established on such *Ideas*?

All these Contradictions, and many more, which each Party pretends are grounded on the same *Scripture*, have induced me to allow it no Attention; to give over all use of a
Book

Book which contains Difficulties*, insuperable even to such as are best versed in it.

This Discourse almost struck me dumb; and to change the Subject a little, I ask'd him, whether he had met with many in this way of thinking. Great numbers, replied he; there are several who go still farther, and give into *Pyrrhonism*. But very few of either sort care to pass for what they are; *Interest* is a Barrier they cannot pass. They subject themselves by *Grimace*, to what others do out of devotion: They have one Language for the *Public*, another for *Private* Conversation. This, continued he, is a Baseness and Cowardice, which I have always abhorred. It is unworthy of an *honest Man* to act the *Comedian*, particularly where Religion is concerned.

From some other things he said, I understood that the Appellation of *Christian* serves as a Covering and *Asylum* to all sorts of Characters. I found that this Gentleman distinguished himself from others by an uncommon Frankness; that there is a sort of greatness of Soul, in venturing to incur the Disesteem of all who call themselves Christians, and have no patience with any Person of a different Denomination. I thought it a very melancholy Reflection, that a Man of so good a *Heart* should be so strongly prejudiced, that there is but little room for hoping to reclaim him.

The

* Here again he goes on a groundless Supposition.

The Sequel of the Story of the DEIST.

LETTER II.

S I R,

I Have had no less Curiosity than you concerning our *Deist*; I talk'd with him yesterday on several Subjects, which gave him an opportunity of relating part of his own History. I will not undertake to give you the Particulars of it at present; that will be done better by Word of Mouth. It is sufficient that I tell you, that many Years Travels in several Countries, and among different People, have afforded him an Opportunity of making an exact Enquiry into Religion, or rather into the different Systems of Religion, which prevail in each Country.

In every Country, said he, we find Men of Sense and Learning; Men who are Masters of the Art of Reasoning, and who, when heard separately, seem'd to argue very justly. Wherever I went, I sought the Acquaintance of Men of this Class. I propos'd to hear the Reasons on both sides, being myself intirely *Neuter*, and then espouse the Party, whose Arguments proved the strongest * Here my

* Here again the *Deist* proceeds on false Principles, or ill-grounded Suppositions. He begins with supposing that the *True* is peculiar to one Party only. He then supposes, that the most seemingly strong Arguments are the only Demonstration of the *True*. These Suppositions lead him to Conclusions still more false.

my Case was like that of an unexperienced Judge; the last Pleadings they hear, appear to them unanswerable, 'till another is produced which carries the Prize. Thus by Arguments which seem'd to me demonstrative, I was obliged to admit of contrary Opinions successively. A Success so different from what a Man might naturally expect, who is in quest of Truth, discouraged me so, that I was resolved to hear no more of it*. Truth always giving me the slip, when I imagined I had found it, I was tempted to think that *Truth* or *Religion* was a mere *Chimæra*. At last I gave into *Pyrrhonism*, and concluded that there is nothing fixt or certain, that all things are equally *problematical*†, that the *True* and the *False* depend on the manner of Reasoning.

I met with several Persons in the same way of thinking; and some well-written Books confirmed me in it. I amused myself with
reading

* This Conclusion is very much like that of an honest Man, who had been cheated by *Tartuffe*; *From this time, I renounce the Acquaintance of all good Men.*

† The Art of Reasoning may indeed make all Things appear equally *problematical*; but it doth not thence follow that they are *really* so. Men, who know how to view *Things* in their *Origin*, do not permit themselves to be dazzled with *specious Arguments*. On the other hand, such as are acquainted with no other *Evidence* than what arises from a long Train of Arguments, depend more or less on the Abilities of those whom they hear argue. They are often reduced to the necessity of *successively* espousing *Contraries* or *Opposites*. This appears from the *Deists* Experience.

reading such Pieces during a long Voyage. The Captain of the Ship, with whom I frequently conversed, began to come into my Notions; and I was very near making him a Profelyte to *Pyrrhonism*.

But a violent Storm, which put us in imminent danger of Shipwreck, made my most persuasive Arguments vanish. It was then no time for doubting of the Existence of a GOD, for considering the Language of *Conscience* as a *Chimæra*, for silencing it by Arguments in form, or artful Turns; its Authority was felt by intolerable Reproaches, which silenced every other Language. I my self was stung with Remorse for having done the Captain so ill an Office, and was obliged to let him know it, in order, if possible, to repair the Injury I might have done him. I found him entirely undeceived: He told me the Storm and the Impression it had left on his Mind, had had more Force on him than all the Eloquence of my Books.

Thus, from a *Pyrrhonist*, I became what you call a *Deist*.

I then asked him whether he never after that time had the Curiosity to make a farther Enquiry into Religion, and read the Holy Scripture. More than once, replied he: But the Fear of falling back into a *Chaos* of Contradictions, which perhaps would have brought me once more into *Pyrrhonism*, made me stop where I am. I find, after all, that it is bet-

ter

ter for me to stick to a small Number of *undoubted* Principles, which depend on no Book, than to be agitated by an infinity of Opinions taken from the same Book, which often contradict one another, or prove the Sources of Contradictions.

Here I asked him, whether he admitted a *Providence* among his Principles. The Idea, says he, that I entertain of a Deity, who can do what he pleases, and must love his own Work, would persuade me that he cannot abandon it to blind Chance. This Sentiment seems to me as indelible as that of a Deity. But the moment I pretend to judge of it by the Event, and reason on the state of Things, on the Disorder I see through the whole World, that *first Idea*, or Sentiment disappears; I lose all Ideas of Providence*.

What do you think, said I, of the *Immortality of the Soul*? Is that one of the Principles you espouse? I can never persuade myself, answered he, that every thing ends with the present Life. A profound Sentiment told me

* This confirms the Observations made in the fourth and fifth Letters. When this Man consults the Idea he entertains of the Attributes of the perfect Being, he there finds the Idea of a *Providence*. It is impossible for him to doubt it, while he stops at that Point. But the Moment he attempts to reconcile the *Detail* of Events with that *first Idea*, he is bewilder'd. He is then tempted to doubt of what he had before received as indisputable.

me the contrary†, even when I most strove to silence it. I own I have no *distinct Idea* of the *State* of the *Life to come*, and that the Opinions of Divines of different Persuasions, instead of giving me any Satisfaction in that Point, have shock'd me to the last degree.

Among other Opinions, that of *Eternal Damnation* has not a little contributed toward giving me an Aversion to the Christian Religion. What increased my Surprise, was to find Christians, though *divided* on several other Points, *united* in this. An Opinion so injurious to the Deity, so contrary to all Ideas of *natural Equity*, was much more proper for making me a *Pyrrhonist*, than a good Man. This, however, is the *Restraint*, as they term it, which they pretend deters Men from Vice. They undertake to make Men virtuous by the Idea of a *cruel, implacable and unjust* Deity. The Event must show how well this Pretence has succeeded.

I then observed to him, that the Doctrine of *Eternal Damnation* had been long called in question by several judicious Protestants: that I had

† The Ideas, we naturally entertain of a *Life to come* are rather *negative* than *positive*. A Man like this freely owns he has no distinct Ideas of the State of the other World. Tell him you know more of the Matter, that Revelation has given you a Light into it, that it plainly tells us some Men will be eternally happy, others eternally miserable; you thus inspire him with a new Prejudice, and furnish him with a strong Objection against a Religion so contrary to all Ideas of natural Equity. He immediately declares this would be unjust.

had heard talk of a *Book* lately published, which undertakes to establish the contrary Opinion by good Proofs. Had you not quarrell'd with all the Books written by Christians on Religion, continued I, I would undertake to show it you. I might, replied he, read it out of Curiosity; but do not think it would have any Persuasion for me. Do you think this Work has any Patrons? It is not yet known, replied I, what Reception the Book will meet with from the Public. There is good reason to believe the Vulgar will be startled at it.

We afterwards talked on other Subjects; and I had an Opportunity of observing, that since the fortunate Storm, which awakened the Sense of *Truth* or the *Language* of *Conscience* within him, he had show'd it much Respect. I found that he directed that way all the Care and Application which others employ in the Practices required by their Religion.

Methinks, said I, taking my leave of him, in spite of all the Aversion you profess for the Christian Religion, you retain the *true Principles* of it, and consequently would be more proper for becoming a Christian, if you are not already so, than the Generality of those who imagine themselves Christians.

How is it possible, said he, that I should become a Christian? I have but too well examined the different Religions of Christians. In all probability the Christian Religion has undergone no Change; and I shall still meet
with

with the same Contradictions I have formerly found in it*. Let me hear no more of it, continued he; I am apprehensive of the Rock of *Pyrrhonism*, on which the View of so many Contradictions once threw me.

But, said I, supposing I should observe to you that the *different Religions* of Christians and the *Christian Religion* are two things: If it were demonstrated to you, that this contains not the Contradictions which you attribute to it, and that it was always free from them: if it was made evident to you, that you have not been startled at IT, but at the *false Representations* given you of it: should I farther tell you, that you respect it in the main, even while you seem to despise it: I own, answer'd he, that I would not believe one Word of the matter, 'till it is proved by Experience. Here we parted, and I have not seen him since.

I met a Friend to whom I communicated what had passed. He seem'd surpris'd to hear of so much Honesty in a *Deist*: and we agreed that Men are frequently termed *Deists*, who at the bottom are *Pyrrhonists*.

The Story of our Traveller gave us an opportunity of observing the difference between the *Incredulity* of Persons of those two Characters; *Incredulity* becomes criminal not by *Want of Evidence*, but by *wilfully shutting the*
 VOL. II. N Eyes

* As he all along builds on the same Supposition, his Conclusions are always the same.

Eyes against it. We look'd on the Case last mentioned to be that of the *Pyrrhonist*, as the first is that of the *Deist*.

The *Pyrrhonist*, in order to support his Doubts, is obliged to take some pains for obscuring the Idea of a GOD, and deafening himself to the Language of Conscience, as well as to that of all Nature. An *Evidence* of this kind is so *inevitable*, that a Man cannot be honest, who pretends to avoid it.

The *Evidence*, which the *Deist* seeks, is of a different nature. He requires Information concerning the Christian Religion: the Contrariety and Opposition, found in Christian Societies, give birth to his Doubts; and the *opposite* Senses, given by those Societies to the Scripture, are the Cause of his Aversion to it.

I think, said my Friend, that the *Necromancer's* Narrative * might help us to an Explanation of the *Deist's* Case. In order to read the *Book of Light*, he has tried all the several sorts of *Glasses*, made in the gloomy Country. By the help of some, he has seen *White*, through others *Black*. Hence 'tis concluded that the *Book* itself is full of Contradictions, and authorises both the *Pro* and the *Con*. He never once suspected that the Contradictions were only in the *Glasses*. He would certainly change his Notions, if he endeavour'd to see things with his own Eyes. Thus ended our Discourse.

T W O

* Dialogue XVII.

T W O
L E T T E R S

Concerning the

MISTAKEN POINT

O F

H O N O U R

Among WRITERS.

Written in the Year 1734.

N 2

Advertisement of the Bookseller.

*THE two following Letters falling
into my Hands, I thought it not im-
proper to place them here.*



LETTERS

By the AUTHOR of the

FOURTEEN LETTERS.

YOU inform me, Sir, that Mr. Professor *R*— is engag'd in a new Confutation * of the *Fourteen Letters*; and you suppose, that as soon as this Work shall reach me, I shall resume my Pen to answer it. Give me leave to tell you, Sir, that for this once you have been mistaken in your Conjecture; the Case is extremely different from what it was before.

The Question turns upon one of these two Points: either Mr. *R*— undertakes to overthrow the *System* of the *Restoration* by establishing the System of an *Eternity of Misery*; or he attacks *the Author* of the *Letters*, by exposing and confuting the weak Places of his Book.

N 3

If

* Or, to speak with more Exactness, an *Answer* to the *Reply*, which ought to be called a *Rejoinder*.

If he attempts the former, I shall readily leave to the Reader the Task of examining, which of the two Systems is best *founded*. If he determines upon the latter, the Criticism will fall upon the *Author only*; in which Case I think it would be imprudent to entertain the Public with *personal* Disputes, in which it is very little interested.

A Writer indeed owes so much Justice to the Public, as to illustrate or unfold what he had at first laid down in too concise a manner, and which might give occasion to dangerous Interpretations, or to such Consequences, as he does not admit.

It is for this Reason, that I thought myself oblig'd to answer Mr. Professor R—'s Book. I found, that his Confutation furnish'd me with an opportunity of explaining myself to more advantage, and (what I consider as of greatest Importance) of representing in a clearer Light the *practical Consequences*, which result from this System.

I am not ignorant, that I have still left many things unsaid upon this Subject; but I flatter myself, that I have at least said enough to remove all Ground of perverse Explanations or pernicious *Consequences*.

After this, I willingly leave it to the Reader's *Penetration*, and the *Evidence* of the Point itself, to determine the Scale.

It does not appear to me, that the Interest of Truth requires *Replies* and *Rejoinders* without

out end. These sorts of Debates, which arise from the *simple Exposition* of things, degenerate into Disputes of the Writers themselves. It is no longer *Error*, which we attack, but our *Antagonist*. We exclaim against his Want of Judgment. “ Was there ever seen such
“ wretched Reasoning? It is downright Ignorance of the first *Rudiments* of the *School*.
“ What miserable Logic is this!”

We proceed further: we charge him with Insincerity: we trifle upon his Expressions.
“ His Quotations are not exact, or at least
“ too much abridg’d. He eludes the Force
“ of this Proof: he perverts the Sense of this
“ Passage: a Person ought to be well skill’d
“ in the original Languages, to understand
“ it thoroughly: the ablest Interpreters give
“ a quite contrary Sense to it. It is true, that
“ in such and such a Circumstance the *Hebrew* Text seems to favour the Author; but
“ it is true, that in such and such other
“ more determinate Circumstances, the *Greek*
“ and *Hebrew* are of our side.”

And how will the poor Reader, who for his Edification finds himself embarrass’d in these Perplexities, be able to extricate himself?

What think you, Sir? Would you approve of my Rashness in engaging in a Contest with Mr. Professor, in order to know, which of us is the greater Master of the Rules of Logic, or
the

the better vers'd in the Oriental Languages and the Commentators?

You judge very rightly, that for all these and many other Reasons I should strike fail without the least hesitation. If I were infatuated enough to enter the Lists with Mr. Professor upon Subjects of this nature, I should justly deserve the *Hellebore**, which he mentions.

Far from disputing these Points with him, I acknowledge ingenuously, that many of the *Terms of Art* used in the *Schools* were unknown to me before I read his Book; and I do not doubt, but that, which he is actually composing, will furnish me with Instructions of the same kind; for to do justice, the Irregularities of my Style, and the Want of Exactness in the Choice of my Expressions, will give him occasions enough to read me Lectures of Criticism.

You must therefore agree, Sir, that in whatever manner Mr. Professor proceeds in his new Confutation, I ought not to be in the least ashamed of abandoning to him the *Field of Battle*.

It is, say you, owning one's self conquer'd, to sit still without making a Reply; and it is concluded, that he, who continues silent, is sensible of the Weakness of his *Cause*. This Conclusion is not an infallible one; and such a *Silence* may arise from other Causes.

It

* See *Ex. Orig.* p. 76.

It may be concluded, that he, who is silent, leaves Truth and Time to discover, which is the better Cause ; that he has such a Respect for the Publick, as to cut short those tedious Controversies, which degenerate into Chicane-ry, and of which generally the only Object is the *Point of Honour* among Writers.

It may be likewise concluded, that the Writer in question not having the Reputation of an Author to support, much less that of a learned Man, is little concern'd for his own Justification.

L E T T E R II.

S I R,

YOU constantly suppose, that I cannot dispense with my self from answering the new Reply, which Mr. Professor is going to publish. I cannot tell of what kind that Work will be; but I do not see any Reason of weight enough to over-balance those, which I have to continue silent.

I return to what I have said. What kind of Defence ought I, in your Opinion, to undertake? That of the *System*, or that of my self? In this latter Case, it would be absolutely playing the fool with my self to presume to amuse the Public, merely to inform them, that *I have Reason on my side*, and that *it was very wrong to attack me*.

My

My View must therefore be to defend the System: but in this Case I shall be reduc'd to mere useless and tedious *Repetitions*; for I do not know, that I can establish it upon other Foundations, than that of *immutable Truths*, confirm'd by the Testimony of the *Scriptures*; nor can I appeal to any other Judge than *Common Sense* or *Right Reason*.

You tell me, that Mr. Professor will oppose me with other Weapons; that his profound Learning * will enable him to overthrow me. In such a case I repeat it, I ought to acknowledge myself conquer'd: the Weapons would by no means be equal. As I am furnish'd with no other than those of common Sense, here is a new Reason for my Silence.

You tell me further, that I shall be obliged to justify my self with regard to the pretended Errors, which will be found in my Book: that pernicious Consequences will be drawn from most of the Propositions, which I advance. But tell me, I request you, whether there is any System, which is not susceptible of such Interpretations; and without going very far, does not that of absolute Predestination, of which Mr. R—— is an Advocate, lead evidently to Consequences, which no Person will avow?

These Consequences are much more injurious to Religion, than those, which can be drawn

* The Notion of Learning is made to include the Knowledge of the Oriental Languages; as well as that of various Interpreters and Commentators.

drawn from the System of the Restoration; and the pretended *Relaxation*, which is endeavour'd to be found in it, is not comparable to the Destruction * of the *Divine Attributes*.

In short, to say, that a Being *can* render all his Creatures happy, and that he *will* not, is to *assert* plainly, that such a Being is an *ill one*. To say, that he foresaw, before he created them, that their Misery would be irrecoverable, and that notwithstanding this he produc'd them into Being, is to say, that he takes pleasure in the Death of a Sinner, and in eternal Death. To say, that when he can annihilate them, he chooses to see them in *everlasting Torments*, is to impute Cruelty to him.

Mr. R—— disowns these Consequences: this is sufficient to restrain one from ascribing them to him.

I disown in the same manner beforehand all those, which may be attributed to me contrary to my real Sentiments.

But after all, the Risk does not seem considerable on that side. If Persons, who *judge* without *seeing*, cry out after others, that this System tends to destroy Religion, there is some ground to presume, that those, who are willing to see before they *judge*, will find in this
System

* Tho' this Expression may appear too strong, it is certain, that the System of *Predestination*, join'd to an Eternity of Misery, involves in it Consequences, which tend to overthrow the Idea of the Divine Goodness and Justice.

System the true Principles of Religion. They will at least do justice to the Intentions of the Writer; they will observe in him a pacific Spirit, which tends to unite, and not to divide; a Character of *Humanity* and *universal Benevolence*, which would not be of disadvantage to Society, if it had a place amongst Men, and which would especially be suitable to Christians.

If prejudic'd Persons see things in another light, I do not think, that to overwhelm them with Arguments is the proper way to undeceive them.

They are either sincere, or not. If they are in the latter Case, it would certainly be losing one's labour; if in the former, let us not be in pain for them. *Truth* and *Time* will enlighten them sooner or later, as far as shall be necessary; and tho' they should not come to think upon certain Points precisely as we do, the Misfortune would not be considerable. It would be a Weakness to pretend to bring all People of good Sense to our *Point of View*.

June 24,

1734.

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F I N I S.